ABSTRACT

ON CHAN ART AND ZEN ART

By

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This thesis analyzes the ideological construct of Zen Buddhist art and provides suggestions for reconceptualizing this construct within Buddhist visual culture. The concept of Zen art has been part of a larger strategic effort by Buddhist modernizers to adapt Japanese Buddhist institutions for survival amidst rapid political reforms in Japan. Thus, the concepts of Zen art and, by extension, Chan art largely reiterate the ideological claims of Japanese modernization. A range of objects only loosely connected to the actual religious practices of Chan or Zen Buddhism have been categorized according to highly subjective modernist aesthetics. Comparison to the actual functions of visual culture in Chan and Zen religious tradition, as well as examination of the specific criteria used to determine objects as Chan or Zen art, leads to a less political and more contextual method of interpreting objects previously subsumed under Zen art and Chan art.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this thesis is to analyze the process by which certain objects have been categorized as Zen Buddhist art (as well as the art related to "Chan," Modern Chinese pronunciation of "Zen"). How does an object become Zen or Chan art? Who defines these categories? Answers to such questions are complicated. However, the answers are complicated because objects are often categorized as Zen art (and Chan art) in vague and contradictory ways. These answers have little relation to any inherent ineffability or profundity claimed by sectarian religious rhetoric. It is the political and doctrinal positions of certain individuals which determine the classification of objects as Chan art and Zen art.

A second goal of this thesis is to avoid this partial and inconsistent classification system by asserting the historical context of objects as a means of organizing an explicit taxonomy of Zen or Chan objects. Specifically, objects such as paintings and calligraphic works are interpreted according to their relationship to the historical canonic texts associated with individual sectarian lineages of Chan and Zen Buddhism. Interpreted critically, these texts have provided the historical models for understanding the development of Chan and Zen Buddhist groups within the larger Buddhist religious structures in East Asia. The texts of Chan and Zen thus provide a relatively systematic means of reinterpretation.

The body of this thesis (excluding the introduction and conclusion) is organized into four chapters. Three chapters are each devoted to individual themes which structure the concept of Chan and Zen Buddhist art: modernity, Buddhism, and art. The chapter following these three chapters is a discussion of the specific criteria used to relate visual objects to Chan and Zen Buddhism.

Following this introduction, the second chapter begins with an overview of the discourse of modernity and modernization in East Asia. Because of situational variance in how modernity is conceptualized, the discussion tracks the iteration of modernity that shaped political reforms in the Japanese state and East Asia. Sectarian Buddhist institutions had to adapt to these political reforms. The concepts of Zen art and Chan art largely emerge from these sectarian adaptations.

The subsequent chapter on Buddhism provides a functional definition of Chan and Zen Buddhism as comprised of historical religious movements and apart from modernist adaptations. Textual records provide a means of tracking the religion's development in East Asia and constitute the backbone for reinterpreting Zen art and Chan art. The terms "Chan" and "Zen" are themselves analyzed according to their historical development within Buddhist texts, derived from a term meaning meditative practice and by extension a categorical division of a set of schools or lineages within the larger Buddhist community. These individual lineages of Chan or Zen varied.

The fourth chapter continues by contrasting the Western concept of the fine arts with an analogous concept from traditional East Asian context. This section also locates a discourse on visuality and visual culture endemic to traditional Chan Buddhist discourse,

which lays the foundation for a contextually grounded definition of Chan and Zen Buddhist art and visual culture.

The fifth chapter begins by differentiating between the established modernist concept of Zen Buddhist art and its proposed reinterpretation. This reinterpretation involves developing a functional definition for Chan and Zen Buddhist art and analyzing the criteria used to determine an object's relationship to Chan or Zen Buddhism. Six types of criteria are analyzed. These criteria are based on the formal attributes of an object, as well as the object's context and function. Analysis favors defining Chan and Zen art in terms of Chan and Zen literature.

The final chapter is a conclusion, which recapitulates the larger goals of this study and analyzes the limits of the research conducted for this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

MODERNIZATIONS

"Chan art" appears synonymous with "Zen art," yet each concept points to a different set of assumptions. The term Zen art was formulated within very specific modernist, nationalist, and sectarian ideological matrices. Using the term Chan art changes some of these ideological contexts and challenges some of the assumptions of Zen art. To simply reiterate the terms Zen art or Chan art without taking into account the formative ideological contexts behind the terms unconsciously perpetuates a thousand years of politically weighted interpretation. The purpose of this section is to describe how modernity, nationalism, and sectarianism determine the ideas of Zen, art, Zen art (taking Zen art to indicate the nexus of Zen and art), and Chan art. Accounting for these ideological discourses is a step towards formulating a less politically fraught interface between Buddhism and art, in which the objects subsumed by the categories of Chan art and Zen art may be reevaluated. When certain objects are understood within specific historical contexts of creation and function, sometimes the boundaries used to categorize these objects as "Zen art" or "Chan art" become less distinct and less convincing. Analyzing the taxonomic criteria by which an object is labeled as Zen art or Chan art leads to a reconfiguration of these criteria towards clarity and specificity. One suggestion would be to disregard previous claims of Zen art and Chan art, and instead base an object's classification on the historical practices of the religion itself, specifically its textual practices.

More specifically, unpacking the ideological claims made from within the modern Rinzai 臨濟 Buddhist institution on the concept of Zen art and the objects this classification is thought to comprise will lead to a more comprehensive view of the environments and discourses surrounding objects related to Chan and Zen Buddhism. As there have been and continue to be variant types of Chan and Zen Buddhism (Chan and Zen being themselves groupings within Buddhism), to be partial to the doctrines and rhetoric of only one form of Zen or Chan is to disregard the larger historical development of Buddhism as a religion, and thus of any Buddhist art. To understand the material objects circumscribed by the term art, the objects must be located within the specific cultural formations that determine an object's social and aesthetic function. Ultimately, any identification of objects as Zen art or better, within a Chan or Zen visual culture, is inseparable from the larger historical religious circumstances of Chan and Zen Buddhism, multifaceted religious traditions whose values are in large part asserted through a rhetoric and a mythology that remains embedded within a shared East Asian textual tradition.

Modernities

In asserting that Zen art is a modern concept, the term "modern" is used in a very particular, local sense. In normal usage "modernity" is commonly understood to describe the shape of the present, here and now. In a second and useful definition, modernity is neither a general sense of now, nor a historical era, "the modern period," but rather a special consciousness of a preponderance of ideological, social and technological changes that engender a sense of drastic transformation:

> Modernity, with notable and serious exceptions, is held by many to be superior and progressive, in an evolutionary sense, to the historical periods that preceded it. . . . Modernity implies modernization, a continuous process of improvement in the

> capacity of humanity to manage and control its physical, social and cultural environment for its own benefit. (Waters 1999, xii)

The definition of modernity that the anthology provides assumes a seemingly continuous progression from something else, an other, forming a dichotomy between past and present. Descriptions of this past other can range in connotation, from "traditional" to "primitive," both terms essentially pointing at some form of pre-modern status. Accordingly, a central distinction that separates definition of modernity quoted above from its more quotidian usage is that, when discussed in depth, the status of modernity is not simply temporal. A central assumption of this modernity is that some kind of material change separates the modern here from the pre-modern over there. If modernity were to be defined as a continuous temporal progression, then there could be no specific boundary between modern and pre-modern. Therefore, that which structures and delimits the modern present from the pre-modern past is cultural change.

The status of modernity is largely defined by European and North American precedent. It is commonly understood that Europe became culturally modern after the Middle Ages, in what is commonly known as the Early Modern period (a title which confuses the two senses of modernity as temporal and cultural). However, according to André Gunder Frank, this perceived cultural modernity of Europe has been tied to an ideological social theory that ignores or misrepresents the economic and material models of development outside of Europe. For Frank, this large-scale myopia has led to conceits of "European 'exceptionalism' of rationality, institutions, entrepreneurship, technology, geniality, in a word—of race" (Frank 1998, 4). Many scholars and theorists have largely ignored looking at the larger world system of trade and technology prior to European entrance into these larger markets, assuming that the so-called modernization

of Europe was an internal and unique process. These assumptions have led to the propagation of universalist social theories that are meant to account for all societies at all times and are singularly based on economic, materialist development of Europe. Frank (1998) attempts to correct these assumptions by tracking the history of the worldwide economic system: "regardless of the variety of their domestic relations—never mind 'mode' or 'modes'—of production, far more important is participation in a single world economy, which is only obscured by this undue or even misplaced emphasis on 'modes of production'" (30).

Frank and others have written extensively on the overall lack of change between pre-modern and modern modes of production within the world economy—European economies not catching up to world trade until the 1800s via the vast influx of commodities from the colonization of the Americas. The implications of this relative reading of "modernity" make historical data on the development of societies in East Asia more revealing. Frank (1998) cites Adam Smith's *On the Wealth of Nations*: "'China is a much richer country than any part of Europe,' Smith remarked in 1776" (13). Another example is found in Jaques Gernet's history of the latter part of Southern Song dynasty (1127–1276) in China. Gernet (1970) exposes a contrast between modernities:

> Thirteenth-century China is striking for its modernism: for its exclusively monetary economy, its paper money, its negotiable instruments, its highly-developed enterprises in tea and in salt, for the importance of its foreign trade (in silks and porcelains) and the specialization of its regional products. Large sections of commerce were in the hands of the omnipresent State, which derived the main part of its revenue from a system of State monopolies and indirect taxation. (17–18)

The Song dynasty is "striking" in that European cultural modernity does not begin until several centuries later. Thus we find that whereas cultural modernity is commonly

taken uncritically to describe recent history, the implications of the concept reveal it to be an ideological construct that reaffirms a perceived social status, as an assertion of a power relationship. If cultural modernity is taken to be the adoption of new technologies and social structures such as capitalism, then, in light of European adoption of technologies already present in other parts of the world, is European modernity a local process in which Europe simply became globalized (or Easternized)?

The untenability of the theory of cultural development into pre-modern and modern has direct and wide-ranging implications. Not only does it affect how Buddhism and art were conceptualized (and thus any assertion of Chan art or Zen art), it also affects the social environment in which Buddhism and art are asserted. As modernity was vigorously championed by reformers at certain times in the histories of Japan and other regions of East Asia, without necessarily containing any sort agency for progress, modernity instead appears to be an ideological device used to promote the accumulation of power or a rationalization for the exercise of power—power which is in turn used to restructure society based on the ideals of the modernizers. In the case of Japan, these modernizers also frequently claimed political leadership and other positions of power. The adaptations made by Buddhist institutions reflect this political dynamic. For certain Japanese Buddhists, the configuration "Zen art" is part of a larger response to the assertions of power made by Japanese leadership.

National Modernization

The ideological division between pre-modernity and modernity is complicated by differences in how this division is asserted in particular cultural contexts, with each of these contexts contingent on time, location, and language. In East Asia the rhetoric of

modernity structures the processes of national modernization; these processes in turn determine the conceptualization of Zen art and Chan art in East Asia. The idea of national modernization is that a social group can undergo a process in which it seeks to become a modern nation through forms that include creating a distinct national culture. National modernization is the attempt at systemic change within a society at a national level, and this change is invariably accompanied by various cultural adaptations by the various members within the society. The usage of modern/modernity in "modernization" is at variance with the previous usages, as it assumes modern to be something that certainly exists but is external to the society. "Modernity" becomes a goal to be achieved. However, the differences between an idealized national modernity and the actual cultural practices within a society are necessarily subjective. Imagined progress towards modernity might not include qualitative improvement for some parts of a society, and modernization has even been detrimental to other parts of a society.

James Edward Ketelaar has tracked the process of national modernization in Meiji Japan (1868–1912) specifically in terms of its effect on the Buddhist community. Ketelaar (1990) describes how the Meiji state implemented a national, systematic persecution of Buddhism that forced Buddhist institutions to adapt in drastic ways:

> Buddhism. . . caught in the crossfire between Shintoists, enlightenment thinkers, nationalists, imperialists, economists, Confucians, and the newly emergent scientists and historians (clearly these are not exclusive identities) as they did battle over the correct interpretation of "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika* [文明開化]), underwent severe attacks and, in some locales, was threatened with complete and permanent eradication. (x)

The fact that a Buddhist religious institution eventually found itself a major role in the construction of Japanese national identity (as discussed below) indicates the plasticity of ideological modernity within Japan.

As the rhetoric of modernity largely stems from European precedents of cultural modernity, national modernization is conflated with Westernization, albeit to varying degrees. Certain discourses of nationality outside of Europe internalize a Eurocentrism of modernization. In one sense, the attempts of a non-western culture or nation to become western are illogical because "western" is simply a geographic orientation. In another sense, the practices subsumed under "Western" culture are a complex that defies geographic specificity, so much so that even the terms "European" or "Western" do not necessarily denote any unique cultural characteristics. As stated above, a significant aspect of modernization in Europe entailed the assimilation and exploitation of established global trade practices.

This conflation of modernity with a perceived singularly exceptional culture of the West coincides with a perceived essential cultural dichotomy that divides East from West. Helmut Brinker perpetuates this dichotomy: "People in Japan traditionally have tended to understand and experience 'all things' of this world, animate and inanimate, from within, to let themselves be seized and taken by the, much more so than in the West, where we try to comprehend and intellectually analyze them from the outside" (Brinker and Kanazawa 1996, 11). Though historically based on a Eurocentric discourse on the relationship between self and foreign other (see Said 1979), the binary of East and West invoked here specifically denotes the cultural relationships caused by the increased presence of European and U.S. imperial interests throughout East Asia during and after the nineteenth century. Such a cultural relationship likewise carries with it a multitude of variegated political and cultural assumptions, and misconstrues specific understanding of the individual regions involved. To what extent can one overarching culture

represent the West and another represent the East? Individual societies within the larger regions of Europe and East Asia are all culturally distinct from each other in various ways at both international and intra-national levels. There are also countless cultural similarities between East and West which are not be immediately apparent unless highlighted by some other, even more relatively foreign degree of cultural dissimilarity. One example at the most basic level of material subsistence is the historical agricultural economic bases of the Greco-Roman (Western), Middle Eastern, Indic, and Chinese empires and their stark contrast to the pastoral nomadism of Northern and Central Asia. This division between nomadic and sedentary societies lasted throughout much of the so-called pre-modern period and defined certain shared cultural developments among all societies along the nomadic periphery, including Europe and East Asia (see Sinor 1990).

Certainly, cultures with limited trade or other forms of interaction in different environments are likely to develop separate cultural forms, at social and material levels. However, this is not to say that one culture and another culture are completely antagonistic or oppositional. Different societies in various regions regularly had opportunities to interact, despite a given culture's distinct self-identity. In the case of East Asia—and further much of Central, Southeast, South Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean—cultural isolationism is somewhat of a myth. The multifaceted exchanges along the classical Silk Road are another example of material, and thus cultural, commonality. As has been demonstrated through the "global trade carousel," a geographically extensive and interconnected system of economic trade existed before and during European ("modern") establishment in that system (Frank 1998, 52). Even the anomaly of Tokugawa Japan's isolationism is negated somewhat because of the

controlled relationship between Tokugawa Japan and Europe throughout Japan's isolationist period. Despite the Tokugawa government's isolationist policies, the state also sponsored Dutch studies (蘭学 *rangaku*), which brought important advanced technology prevalent in Europe to Japan. This global model prohibits simplistic reduction into the "East versus West" binary, complicates claims regarding the singularity of Japan's period of "modernization" during and after the Meiji, and somewhat undermines the purported rationale behind the later period of Westernization (as Japan was already influenced by the West). In terms of Zen art, it is important to keep in mind that, as will be pointed out below, the idea of Zen art was only asserted during the Meiji and later periods following major political changes, despite the earlier contact between Japan and Europe.

"East versus West" itself is another ideological construct that can be of political function to the state, and Christine Guth (1996) suggests that the discourse on painting in Meiji Japan as an example of state manipulation:

> the dialectic between the two [日本画 *nihonga* "Japanese-style painting" and 洋画 *yōga* "Western-style painting"] became a microcosm for a discourse on tradition versus modernity and East versus West. The government encouraged this construction of categories through opposition because the resulting closed system helped it maintain control over artistic production and consumption. (18)

This is not to say that the Meiji government was precisely aware of all the effects of its policies, but that the policies of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Japan reveal a degree of experimentation and confusion regarding how to best appropriate an imagined Western culture. All aspects of foreign culture are confused with technological advancement, as in the adoption of contemporaneous foreign cultural practices unrelated to technology. As a discontinuity from traditional Japanese culture,

among the new practices adopted by Meiji Japanese elite society was dressing in Western clothes. A well-known 1873 photograph of the Meiji emperor (明治天皇 Meiji-tennō, 1852–1912; the photo of Emperor Meiji is found on Wikipedia and elsewhere) has him in full European military regalia, heavily decorated with white gloves, shiny shoes, and a matching hairstyle. Suffice to say, the fringed epaulettes that the emperor wears may not be particularly representative of social modernity.

Yet the process of internalization transforms modernization. Modernization is in a sense "indigenized" into different societies and into different facets of society (Appadurai 1993, 328). As the sense of becoming modern in parts of East Asia was different from the term's prevalent usage in the West, model Western nations and Eurocentric ideologies of modernity are inadequate to encompass the variety of reforms that took place under the aegis of national modernization. Cultural change and cultural fixity simultaneously exist at different areas and levels. Just as there is no single ideal modern nation, so there is no fixed path of national modernization. Christine M. E. Guth (1996) comments on the effects of modernization throughout Japan:

> Japan's modernization did not consist simply of a triumph of the new over the discredited old, but also involved a self-conscious and highly selective recasting of the culture of the past. . . . Efforts to generate a sense of nationhood by preserving, strengthening—and even creating out of whole cloth—a unified sense of the past were directed by the government from its headquarters in Tokyo." (17)

Guth's examples of Meiji government manipulation of various parts of Japanese cultural life include the creation of national museums, "appropriation of European architectural techniques," and the 1897 "Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (*Kokuhō hozon hō* [国宝保存法])," all of which extend from what Guth (1996) calls "the Meiji equation of civilization [文明] with industrial production" (17).

Modernization, and its "civilization" rhetoric, functioned as an ideological tool, shaping how individuals imagined or invented aspects of their culture. The status of Buddhist religious institutions in the Meiji and in later periods of Japanese society has depended on how members of the religion interpreted their religion's role and function in conjunction with the imaginations and inventions of those directing policy at the time. As the dominant Meiji discourse involved Japan's attempts to present itself as a modern, Western nation, essentially to assert a Japanese national identity, Buddhists naturally participated in this discourse by adapting how Buddhism was conceptualized.

Religious Modernization

The theory and praxis of modernization/Westernization in East Asia has had widely variant ramifications for local Buddhist social groups throughout the region. Buddhist religious institutions in Meiji Japan, particularly those tied to the secular and philosophical movement of Rinzai Zen, began to adapt Zen Buddhism to the social changes that accompanied modernization. This adaptation has furthermore led to an idiosyncratically nationalist and hegemonic reading of Zen, somewhat related to the direction of Japanese ideological development that culminated in the justification of the "Greater East Asia War" (大東亜戦争), Japan's name for its participation in World War II (see Sharf 1993). The process of modernization and Westernization in Japan has led to a split in how to interpret Zen, and subsequently affects how the term Zen is understood. Zen can be divided into religious Zen and a modernist Zen.

James Ketelaar's 1990 study on the early Meiji persecution of Buddhism in Japan states, "Meiji Buddhism's attempts to define its own history, to give itself meaning, to create, in fact, something called 'Meiji Buddhism,' and then to use that definition to create

a 'social,' 'immediate,' and 'productive' transsectarian unity, was an attempt to dissipate the vision of Buddhism as heresy" (214). As has been mentioned, Ketelaar views the Meiji state persecution of Buddhism as the primary impetus for adaptation within Japanese Buddhism, including Zen. Ketelaar (1990) states, "In the early years of Meiji an anti-Buddhist policy was a significant element of central government policy" (214). However, changes within the religion itself served to reformulate the public role of Japanese Buddhism, and how the religion was perceived at various levels of society, changing the religion's relationship with the Meiji government. Meiji Japanese Buddhists asserted a historical, and thus ostensibly "rational" and "scientific" social role for Buddhism that matched the ideological modernist formulation of Japanese national identity. Ketelaar (1990) continues: "Buddhist histories stepped beyond the boundaries of this Imperial discourse and, after laying claim to a pan-Asian chain of evolutionary cultural development, asserted that a true understanding of 'Japan' would be possible only with a recognition of its position as the culmination of a specifically Asian (read 'Buddhist') development" (216). The process of modernization/Westernization in Japan ultimately transformed Zen from an imperially sponsored set of religious patriarchies into a consciously-wrought, new, semi-secularized ideology.

The secularization of Zen was achieved in part by the popularization of Zen outside of the monastery. Sharf (1993) notes, "Zen was introduced to Western scholarship not through the efforts of Western orientalists, but rather through the activities of an elite circle of internationally minded Japanese intellectuals and globe-trotting Zen priests, whose missionary zeal was often second only to their vexed fascination with Western culture" (108). Theorists including D. T. Suzuki (鈴木大拙 1870–1966), Nishida

Kitarō (西田幾多郎 1870–1945), and members of the Kyoto School (a group connected by proximity to Nishida's philosophical theories and to Kyoto University) redefined modernist Zen from a religion to a philosophy. Both Nishida and Suzuki came out of the same Meiji era cultural milieu of initial hostility towards Buddhism, both sought to legitimate Zen through closer ties to public life in Japan and to receptive audiences in the United States and Europe. Nishida established a philosophical school by adapting Zen religious concepts to philosophy as it was taught in European and American academic institutions. (Scholarly opinion on Nishida's overall political stance is varied; see Heisig 1995). Suzuki published widely in Buddhist Studies and in popular literature in the United States. His lasting influence is varied. Gerald Cooke suggests that by "remaining on the boundary of clerical and lay life in Zen Buddhism . . . [Suzuki] laid out a bridge-head which might support his [scholarly] inquiries into and commendation of Zen tradition and experience in forms not tied to the established point of view," and that "this stance adopted by Suzuki was well designed to escape the main force of the accompanying waves of skepticism and disenchantment with institutional religion [stemming from modernization]" (Cooke 1974, 278). (For a brief overview of Suzuki's Buddhist scholarship see Foulk 1987, 37–38 and 203; for a more critical description of his role in Japanese ultra-nationalism, see Sharf 1993. Suzuki's popular writing is discussed below.) Suzuki also came to have a significant role in defining Zen art.

CHAPTER 3

RELIGION

Buddhism has been described by Bernard Faure (2000) as "at once an internal experience and a social structure" (16). The latter "social structure" defines Buddhism according to its most basic social function: as a religion comparable to other religions and other social structures. Despite Faure's basic assertion of Buddhism as simultaneously both of these things, the innate differences between individual cognitive experience and social function reflect two very different ways of defining Buddhism.

Buddhism as a religion is recognized as a long-standing cultural paradigm in Asia, transcending imperial and national borders during more than two millennia of political flux. Buddhism as a religion has spread through much of Central, South, Southeast, and East Asia as well as other parts of the world. The process of how Buddhism spread geographically and over time is open to interpretive debate, often dealing with degrees of local indigenization of Buddhist ideas and practices as the religion's own ideas and practices entered new societies. Thus it is difficult to account for any kinds of change or adaptation within Buddhism, or even the overall structure of Buddhism itself, without looking at specific historical and regional contexts.

Studying what is for Faure an "internal experience," however, is somewhat afield from the social sciences—this description is vague and elicits questions regarding a specific type of internal experience: whether it is physiological, psychological, or even mystical. Sharf (1995) contends such questions are misplaced: "there is evidence that

the Buddhist emphasis on 'inner experience' is in large part a product of modern and often lay-oriented reform movements, most notably those associated with the vipassana-revival in Southeast Asia, and those associated with contemporary Zen movements in Japan" (246). Sharf suggests that the practices of these reform movements shaped scholarly perceptions of historical Buddhist practices, and thus the larger construct of Buddhism as a whole. By pointing to the modern ideological basis behind the concept of "experience," Sharf points to the disjuncture between "internal experience" and "social structure" that modernist Buddhism has caused. This disjuncture is indeterminate outside of modernist discourse on Buddhism.

Buddhism can thus be interpreted in significantly different ways, and can be likened to the linguistic empty signifier, a term without a referent. Buddhism thus remains largely useless in its emptiness, unless it is identified specifically in a particular historical and epistemic usage.

A Xylographical History of Sinic Buddhism

One way to isolate a usage of Buddhism beneficial for this study is to provide a brief, critical examination of the history of East Asian Buddhism as it relates to the familiar term Zen. A brief outline of points salient to the theory of Zen art will suffice, as histories of East Asian Buddhism are offered in a number of scholarly works, with familiar European-language sources provided by Kenneth Ch'en, Heinrich Dumoulin, Jacques Gernet, Stanley Weinstein, Erik Zürcher, and others. However, a major point of contention with the existing scholarship on the history of Sinic Buddhism is the perceived golden age of Buddhism in the Tang dynasty. Most histories of East Asian Buddhism are largely based on Chinese textual sources which tend to valorize Buddhist practice in

the Tang dynasty. These histories then describe the post-Tang period in East Asia as an age in which Buddhism was in decline, either syncretized with indigenous religions or displaced by the rise of Neo-Confucianism. The golden-age theory has been revised by recent scholarship. Marsha Weidner provides an overview in her introduction to the 1994 volume *Latter Days of the Law*, which includes a general summary of historians, including art historians, who follow the general historical narrative of post-Tang decline, as well as a few recent scholarly works which challenge the assumption (33–48).

A summation of the latter history of East Asian Buddhism is found in the analogous development of Buddhist literature in Chinese language. In other words, a functional usage of the term Buddhism is located in the continuous development the Buddhist literary tradition. This literary development imagines a rhetorical golden age of the Tang dynasty only after the Tang dynasty has concluded. Reliance on literature is a conscious avoidance of using "Buddhist art" or archeology as a historical device because unlike many other objects of study, the religious literature, and particularly the texts of the Chinese Buddhist canon, can be classified and somewhat reliably dated, often through comparative analyses of the content of a text. (Buddhist art will be discussed in the following section.) Canonical Buddhist literature as an object of study has been the focus of most European language scholarship for the last couple hundred years, with scholars largely relying on the content and structure of Buddhist literature to construct the history of the religion (see Lopez 1995, 1–29).

Much recent scholarship questions the historicity of the content of this literature. In a study of the "Regulations of the Ch'an Approach" (Foulk's translation of "*Chanmen Guishi*" 禪門規式, a text found within another text, which Foulk translates as "The

Ching-te [Era] Record of the Transmission of the Lamp" *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* 景得傳燈錄, a text compiled circa 1004–7 CE; CBETA, T51n2076), a canonical scripture with largely unquestioned historical veracity in the creation of early histories of the Chan lineage, Foulk's reading of the scripture suggests that it is implicitly a "religious" and "political document, one which is clearly concerned with the problem of maintaining a satisfactory relationship between the Buddhist (not merely 'Ch'an') monastic order and the state" (Foulk 1987, 5). Foulk goes on to call attention to the fact that there is no other historical data to account for the historicity of the document, despite its significance in historical reconstruction. Much of the scholarship based on the document is suspect.

The overall unreliability of the content of canonical Buddhist texts in reconstructing Buddhist history has led John McRae to formulate a rule for critical reading of canonical texts: "It's not true and therefore it's more important" (McRae 2003, 12). While McRae's rule is an inversion of Hu Shih's methodology of ignoring ahistorical or fallacious material in canonical texts (roughly, "it's not true and therefore it's not important"), McRae points to the prevalence of rhetoric and mythologizing in how Buddhism was historically imagined. It follows that basing history purely on the content of scriptures necessitates, at the very least, rigorous critical analysis. This form of analysis involves attempting to construct a brief history of Buddhism by viewing not the content of the texts, but the material culture of the texts themselves—the material documents, or at least the historical records of the documents' edits and publications. This approach is feasible because a number of texts associated to the Chan lineage exist in the canonical scriptures.

The East Asian Buddhist textual tradition, largely found within Chinese-language canonical collections, is distinct from other Buddhist textual traditions. Given Buddhism's Indic conception with the founder of Buddhism, the Buddha Siddhārtha Gautama Śākyamuni (circa 500 BCE), Buddhist textual tradition first developed as Indic language transcriptions from oral traditions. The collection of early Indic Buddhist literature is known as the "three baskets" (Sanskrit *tripiṭaka*) and can be divided, appropriately, into three sections: "the remembered words of the Buddha . . . later to be codified as *sūtra* literature"; "rules of conduct (*Vinaya*)"; and "*abhidharma*, a special exegetic literature that organized the teachings found in the sutras into numerical categories" (Lancaster 2005, 1252).

Mahāyāna Buddhism, of which Chan is a part, introduced a new set of texts (Lancaster 1975, 30). The rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the development of the Mahāyāna textual tradition, and introduction of Buddhism into East Asia are all intimately linked: the earliest Mahāyāna Buddhist texts are mainly limited to documents translated into Chinese. As Jonathan Silk (2002) writes, "Almost the only hint we get to the relative chronology of . . . old Mahāyāna materials comes from their Chinese translations, dating back to roughly the second and third centuries C.E." (373–4). Complicating this issue, Buddhist texts of Chinese authorship, even if ascribed to the Buddha, are classified as "apocryphal" literature (see Buswell 1990).

Lewis Lancaster provides an overview of canonical developments within Mahayana Buddhism: "Based on the premise that 'whatever is well-spoken is the word of the Buddha' . . . , Mahayana communities began to produce new works they called sūtra, to which they affixed the preamble, 'Thus have I heard,' indicating that these texts, like their

counterparts . . . , were originally spoken by the Buddha" (Lancaster 2005, 1253). Lancaster lists fourteen extant editions of Chinese woodblock canon collections, with publication dates ranging from the eleventh to the early twentieth century.[1] The continued printing of the Buddhist canon presumes a continuation of a religious institution of Buddhism that uses the canon. Quite apart from the theory of Buddhist decline, the repeated publication of the canon in secular and sacred contexts from the Song dynasty up to the twentieth century (with the Taisho canon) further suggests a historical pattern of continual propagation of the religious literature. This continuity begins in the seventh century[2] with the implementation of block printing, progresses through the infrastructural connections between the Buddhist religious institution and the Song state, and lasts up to the twentieth century. Lancaster adds a helpful reminder in the interpretation of texts as analogous to the larger religion of Buddhism: "These texts are often seen as 'elite' document that cannot be used to adequately describe the 'popular' practices and beliefs of the majority of Buddhists. However, it is impossible to describe the practices of beliefs of Buddhists without taking into account the importance they placed on the canonic collections as objects of veneration" (Lancaster 2005, 1252).

Chan and Zen Semantics

As Jeffrey Broughton (2009) has written, "the West . . . has received its overall impression of the Chinese Chan tradition from Japanese Zen, the Western perspective as

[1] While most of these editions were produced by local monasteries, notable exceptions include two "Yong-lo" editions sponsored by the Ming court and completed in Nanjing in 1419 and Beijing in 1584, respectively, and the "Qing edition (1733–1738 CE): a court project, often referred to as the Dragon edition" (Lancaster 2005, 1255; also see *Lidai* 2008).

[2] The first printed text is a Chinese copy of the *Diamond Sutra* currently in the British Museum (Barrett 2001, 3).

now constituted reflects the emphases, shadings, deletions, and blindspots of its Japanese informant" (3). The collected Buddhist textual tradition identified above provides a broader perspective of both Chan and Zen Buddhism. However, the process of identifying the actual functions of Chan from within the textual tradition of Buddhism remains complicated. Chan, like Buddhism, has come to denote a historically and conceptually contingent process, different at various instances of its presencing. The term Chan is necessarily determined to a certain extent by its usage within the rhetorical and mythical contents of Buddhist texts.

Complications regarding Chan can also be found in the multiple translations and transliterations of the word itself. It is tempting to use the character 禪 instead of any alphabetic rendering of the word as it the avoids the specific political connotations of using one language in favor of another: the word's transliteration into an alphabetic system that separates it further from its initial context can be interpreted as a political act. The term is not taken as the invention of any single nation or social group, but as constructed within historical Buddhist discourses. Some of the historical connections of the character 禪 are lost and other cultural connotations are added when it is presented in terms of Chinese "Chan" or Japanese "Zen." "Chan" is generally used in reference to the character's deployment in Chinese context, while "Zen" is used in Japanese context, but the two terms ultimately point to a single textual tradition in East Asia that includes texts from various regions, such as the contributions to the Buddhist canon made from Korean or Japanese authors.

Chan can be interpreted as a form of both Buddhist and pre-Buddhist practice. The earlier Sanskrit term *dhyāna* is used to denote various forms of meditation. As such

"*chan*" or "*channa*" (禪那) can simply be understood as meditation. The current use of the term in Modern Chinese apart from lineage (禪宗 *Chanzong*) as a verb implies seated meditation (坐禪 *zuochan*), a practice. Buddhist canonical literature attests to the sense of Chan as practice, such as the use of the term in canonical texts including the "Seated Meditation Samadhi Scripture" (*Zuochan Sanmai Jing* 坐禪三昧經; CBETA, T15n0614), translated into Chinese by the Central Asian monk Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什, active circa 400). The text describes one form of meditation practice not particularly related to the type of meditation advocated by the later Chan school.

Meditation practice to some extent exists merely as one ritual discipline in the religion of Buddhism. A dictionary definition provides *dhyāna* 's Indic context, stating that "It is one of the six pāramitās" (Soothill and Hodous 1937, 459). The six *pāramitās* are the primary Buddhist means of achieving Buddha-like status.[3] Given the approximately 1200 years of change in pronunciation from Middle Chinese to Modern Chinese, *channa* (in modern Chinese pinyin usage) still at least appears phonetically derived from its Sanskrit progenitor. With the development of *channa* from *dhyāna*, and its subsequent spread into other nearby language groups, the term gained particular definition specific to each language and culture.

Guifeng Zongmi (圭峰宗密 780–841) writes on the Buddhist doctrinal meaning of Chan as it was understood in the Tang dynasty, from the translation of his "Source of Chan" 禪源 by Jeffrey Broughton:

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[3] The *pāramitās* are, "(1) *dāna*, charity; (2) *śīla*, moral conduct; (3) *kṣānti*, patience; (4) *vīrya*, energy, or devotion; (5) *dhyāna*, contemplation, or abstraction; (6) *prajñā*, knowledge" (foreign terms are in Sanskrit; Soothill and Hodous 1937, 267).

"Dhyana" is a Sanskrit term. The full form of the Chinese transliteration is "ch'an-na." Dhyana is translated into Chinese as "ssu-wei hsiu" ["thinking practice"] or "ching-lv" ["quieting thoughts"]. Both refer to samadhi and prajna. The "Source" is the Original-awakening or True-nature of all sentient-beings. It is also called the "Buddha-nature" or "mind-ground." To awaken to it is called prajna; to practice it is called samadhi. Samadhi and prajna together are referred to as "Ch'an." (Broughton 1975, 86–87; Chinese in CBETA, T48n2015).

Chan came to take on meanings well beyond the act of meditation. Yanagida Seizan's *Shoki no zenshi* summarizes Buddhism's translation into Chinese: "the Ch'an lineage cannot necessarily be directly equated with that religion of meditation ([Japanese] *meisō*). Once Indian Buddhism, transmitted through Central Asia, had taken root in Chinese society, the Ch'an lineage set out to negate all of its various elements, and to make a fresh start as a new, distinctively Chinese religion" (translated in Foulk 1987, 232). The common definition of Zen and its connotations are at some odds with its various historical, regional, and social usages.

A useful and succinct suggestion regarding the usage of the term in Tang dynasty Buddhist context is provided in Zongmi's "Chan Preface" (also translated as "Chan Prolegomenon," "*Chongke Chanyuan Quanxu*" 重刻禪源詮序; CBETA, T48n2015). The "Chan Preface" is a document which describes the various types of Chan doctrines and schools that flourished in the Tang dynasty prior to the 845 imperial suppression of Buddhism. Zongmi was interested in recording and taxonomizing the varied teachings of regional meditation specialists and establishing Chan's role in the broader context of Tang Buddhism.[4] While partial to his own Chan school, his preface contains valuable historical data regarding the plurality of extant Chan schools. These various Tang

[4] Chan, despite already having been divided into various sects, was only one school of Tang Buddhism. For instance, Zongmi held patriarchal status in both Chan and Huayan (華嚴, "flower garland"), another contemporary Buddhist school (Qingke 2006, 239).

dynasty Chan schools lay the groundwork for later sectarian divisions. Some of these sects continue into the present. The Linji (in Chinese phonetics) or Rinzai (in Japanese phonetics) sect, mentioned above, first appeared in later Tang dynasty China and later established itself in Japan.

The important distinction to be made is between "meditation" as used to denote certain lineages within Buddhism, with a specified body of canonical literature and formalized rituals, versus the actual practice of Buddhist meditation as was performed by practitioners who were not necessarily from any meditation lineage. For certain groups, the teachings and teachers associated with the title "Meditation" became the nucleus of the entire religion, while for others, "meditation" was tangential to the religion.

A Plurality of Chans

The variety of Chan lineages described within canonical sources points to the possibility of disparate visual cultures for each of the Chan schools. However, a central point is that some visual cultures of Chan are not necessarily different from the visual culture of the larger structure of East Asian Buddhism or East Asian culture. An investigation of the degree of variation within historical Chan and Zen Buddhist religious groups will provide a useful means of identifying which forms of Chan and Zen can be used to determine a visual culture.

According to East Asian canonical Buddhist sources, both Chan and Zen lineages, as well as most classical sectarian divisions within East Asian Buddhism, are ultimately tied to lineal transmission of the position of meditation master. However, the idea that Buddhist meditation practitioners formed groups distinct from the larger Buddhist institution is suspect. Foulk presents a conclusion to his textual research on the

development of early Chan lineage that questions the independence of sectarian Chan in China: "I doubt that members of the Ch'an school in China ever, in the Sui [581–617], T'ang, Five Dynasties [907–960], Sung or any time thereafter, made a break with the Buddhist monastic tradition that resulted in the establishment of separate, independent, uniquely 'Ch'an' institutions" (Foulk 1987, 389). Being in the lineage of a meditation master does not preclude one's participation and identity in the larger Buddhist community, and within separate non-meditation lineages. A preeminent example of such a figure is Guifeng Zongmi, who is recorded as having patriarchal status in both Chan and Huayan lineages.

Lineages are often little more than rhetorical devices, or convenient histories. Yet despite the aforementioned unreliability of literary content, scholars have had few other resources with which to reconstruct historical Chinese Chan. Because of the mythologizing rhetorical tendencies within Buddhist canonical texts, John McRae has proposed a periodization of Chan as a "provisional device" to avoid using traditional lineage myths in writing Chan history. McRae's periodization is ultimately based on the production of literary forms that were incorporated into the Chinese Buddhist canon. These literary forms are analyzed in terms of their development as literary genres. This form of analysis also has the added benefit of avoiding the aforementioned model of Buddhist decline. Chan is divided into "proto-Chan" (circa 500–600), "early Chan" (circa 600–900,) "middle Chan" circa (750–1000), and "Song dynasty Chan" circa (950–1300; McRae 2003, 13). McRae's "proto-Chan" period is comprised of one piece of scriptural literature and "a certain quantity of biographical information . . . [yet] it imparts only a shadowy image of any shared group esprit" (2003, 15). "Early Chan" is

marked by literary "experimentation" (McRae 2003, 17) indicative in the diversity of Chan religious texts found in Dunhuang (Gansu, China). "Middle Chan" is distinguished by the appearance of a new kind of Buddhist literary genre particular to Chan, the "encounter dialog" (*yulu* 語錄; McRae 2003, 18–19). "Song dynasty Chan . . . defines the tradition up until the modern period . . . . the Song dynasty witnessed the emergence of a basic configuration of Chan that was disseminated throughout East Asia, and now the world" (McRae 2003, 20–21). This period also marks the implementation of "'viewing the critical phrase' or kōan [Chinese *gong-an* 公案] practice," which is based around a pithy and paradoxical form of Buddhist literature (McRae 2003, 20)

McRae's analysis does not detail Chan textual development during and after the Song dynasty. However, this period is likewise important, as an important distinction in the Chan textual tradition develops from the Song dynasty onwards. Albert Welter (2002) suggests dividing Song dynasty and later Chan along doctrinal lines, into "moderate" versus "rhetorical" groups (5). Welter's suggestion comes from his study of the historical uses of a text by an early Song dynasty monk Yongming Yanshou (永明延壽 904–975). Yanshou's text, the *Zongjing Lu* (宗鏡錄, which Welter translates as "Records of the Source Mirror"; CBETA, T48n2016) is significant because it differs from other Chan texts in terms of its interpretation of Chan in relation to Buddhist traditions. For Welter, Yanshou's text represents a "moderate" version of Chan Buddhism (Welter 2002, see chart on page 6). This "moderate" concept develops from Yanshou's literary continuation of Guifeng Zongmi's efforts toward combining Chan doctrine with the wider Buddhist literary tradition—Zongmi and Yanshou both sought to bring Chan concepts

into the larger religious structure of Buddhism through textual exegesis. These texts not only combined the teachings of different Chan schools, but also appealed to broader literati sensibilities with their elevated writing styles and rigorous doctrinal expostulations.[5] Broughton (2009) writes that, "the orientation, theoretical structures, and striking similes of his "Chan Prolegomenon" and "Chan Letter" that exerted influence on Song Chan" (40) Moderate Chan culminates in the formation of the Fayan school which is mentioned in Song dynasty Chan texts.

Welter's rival Chan sect is "rhetorical" in the sense that its literature is seen as presenting a doctrinal stance and writing style that perpetuated a rhetoric of antinomianism and disregard for scriptural authority (see Faure 1991). The "rhetorical" texts are also known for a colloquial writing style that eschewed the style of elite classical writings.[6] This latter "rhetorical" Chan is largely represented by the Linji school, which eventually institutionalizes itself in Japan and shapes how Buddhism was presented to the United States. The antagonism between the Linji school's rhetorical Chan and the Fayan school's Moderate Chan is significant in interpreting aspects of Linji or Rinzai identity which continue into the modern period. For instance, Foulk (1987) adds, "The writings of Kuei-feng Tsung-mi . . . on the history of Ch'an were known, but their importance was obscured by Tsung-mi's reputation within the Japanese Zen tradition as the proponent of a discredited doctrinal position [in Japan]" (28). The Fayan tradition thus offers a means of understanding Chan Buddhism within larger East Asian Buddhism, yet as distinct from the Linji/Rinzai school.

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[5] For instance, the *Zongjing Lu* is 100 fascicles long.

[6] The Chinese term for the classical style of writing is *wenyan* 文言. Rhetorical Chan texts are written in vernacular *baihua* 白話, sometimes dated to the Tang dynasty.

Chan, Seon, and Zen

The textual history of Moderate Chan after the Song dynasty becomes multicultural. Welter (2002) states that Moderate Chan had a "persistent influence over Chan and the spread of Chan throughout East Asia, to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, in spite of the persistent claims . . . to the contrary" (7). Broughton's analysis of the presence of Moderate Chan textual records (Broughton uses the term "Guifeng Chan") within Buddhist documents from the Tangut Xixia, Korean Koryo, and Japanese Kamakura, Ashikaga, and Gozan dynasties makes this influence more explicit (see Broughton 2009, 45–64). While the Mongol destruction of the Xixia kingdom effectively ended Tangut Buddhist sponsorship, and while other forms of Zen became more popular in Japan, Korean *Seon*[7] Buddhism retained the moderation of Zongmi and Yanshou. For instance, Broughton (2009) writes that Zongmi's "Chan Prolegomenon," "regularly emerged from the monastic printing establishments and was studied all over the peninsula" (54).

The point of introducing two different ways to conceptualize Chan is not to construct an essential and unchanging dichotomy between moderate Chan and rhetorical Chan; there are strong affinities between the two types of Chan literature. However, moderate Chan shows that the culture of rhetorical Chan and, thus rhetorical Zen, is not singularly normative for Chan and Zen Buddhism. The following section will explore the possibilities in identifying a visual culture of this moderate Chan to offset some of the preconceptions associated with the terms Zen and Zen Art.

[7] "*Seon*" is the transliteration of the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character for Chan, according to the South Korean government's current Romanization standards.

CHAPTER 4

VISUAL CULTURE

Art and Visual Culture

As the textual cultures of East Asian Buddhism (Chan, Seon, Zen, and otherwise) have been a reliable means by which scholars have asserted the historical development of the religion as a whole, any discussion of the visual cultures of Buddhism would benefit from interactions with the textual model of historical development. As has been the case, certain scholars conceptualized visual culture as a reaction to certain limitations in art historical discourse. As Mieke Bal contends, "that discipline [art history] has largely failed to deal with both the visuality of its objects – due to the dogmatic position of 'history' – and the openness of the collection of those objects – due to the established meaning of 'art'" (Bal 2003, 1). Bal's latter argument regarding object categories will be discussed below. However, regarding the former argument concerning an object's visuality, a primary assertion of this thesis is that visual culture is necessarily historical, that is, visual culture is contingent on its historical context.[8] Art history is inherently a discourse on visuality in that art historical discourse extends from certain ways of viewing objects as art.

However, art historical discourse is often limited in its cultural purview of what is or is not art based on the nineteenth century European division of fine art from other kinds

[8] For Bal, the term "history" likely refers to the predominance of certain types of historical narratives in subduing the multivalent cultural interactions that existed in the past, one of these interactions being "visuality."

of visual expression often denigrated as craft, applied art, or industrial art. As is evident in many English-language art-historical surveys of "Chinese art," representational painting, sculpture, and architecture are held as the three preeminent fine arts (for examples, see Lee 1964, Sickman 1991, or Watson 1995 and 2003). While it is difficult to express a complete vision of the varieties and number of objects circumscribed within what has become known as "Chinese art," predominant traditions assert the "three perfections" of painting, calligraphy, and poetry (as in Zheng Qian's *sanjue* "鄭虔之詩、書、畫," described in Yü 2007), as the most esteemed forms of elite cultivation and refinement (see Sullivan 1999). The differences between the two traditions indicate the extent to which art is a culturally relative and subjective construct. Again, there is no essential antagonism between an art history of the East and one of the West. The two traditions appear to privilege the shared field of painting. This link allowed some connoisseurs of art to appreciate Chinese painting in a similar way to European painting, for instance ascribing European theories of stylistic development to Chinese painting.

Of course, Chinese painting has its own theoretical traditions of criticism, history, and connoisseurship. These theoretical traditions are largely confined to textual records, and more to the point, tied to the elite class of scholar-bureaucrat men (see Bush 1971 and 1983). Elite painting theory in China reflects the biases of the social group that produced it, in that it asserts its own member painters as somehow superior to those from other groups. While there was certainly disagreement with this theoretical tradition from other parts of Chinese society, literati painting theory, as asserted by educated officials in positions of power, dominates so much of the textual tradition to the extent that until relatively recently Chinese painting theory was synonymous with the literati

aesthetic theory. Theoreticians were regularly the literati painters themselves, so that the overall discourse on painting generally perpetuates the values of this particular class of painters. Susan Bush (1971) provides a general sense of the history of literati painting, which was dominant in Chinese textual records: "[literati painting is] an art form that was first practiced by a social class and then slowly evolved into a stylistic tradition" (3).

Literati painting discourses are often related to themes such as brushwork, expression versus representation, and status. Undoubtedly pervading the Chinese traditional discourse on the arts is the classical Confucian pronouncement that for the distinguished gentleman, any sort of cultural cultivation must be secondary to moral practice.[9] At least since the Song dynasty, painters have maintained Su Shi's (蘇軾 1037–1101) often cited poetic verse that "interpreting pictures based on how realistic they appear is childish" ("*Lunhua yi xingsi / Jian yu ertong lin*" "論畫以形似/見與兒童鄰"; Zhang 2005, 105). This distinction developed into a perceived social division between literati amateur painters and lower-class professional painters. By the Ming dynasty, literati theorists equated this social division with the mythology of North-versus-South doctrinal division in Chan Buddhism. The Chan North-South debate, which began in the mid-to-late Tang dynasty, held that an earlier Northern School proposed a gradualist style of enlightenment, whereas the Southern School maintained a subitist (or "all-at-once") style of enlightenment (the debate itself was largely invented by one mid-eighth century monk to undermine the dominant Chan school of the period; see

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[9] The idea comes from the *Lunyu* of Confucius, which has been translated by D. C. Lau: "If he has energy to spare from such action, let him devote it to making himself cultivated" (Lau 1979, 60; also in Chinese canons as *Xue Er* 學而, verse 6).

McRae 2002). The analogous painting theory appears in the Ming dynasty, particularly through the works of Mo Shilong (莫是龍, active circa 1567–1600) and Dong Qichang (董其昌, 1555–1636), who were both literati painters. Their North-South painting theory equated literati amateur painting with the Southern school and professional artisan painting with the discredited Northern School (see discussion below).

Yet, despite the theoretical tradition connected to painting (as well as to poetry and calligraphy, see Murck 2002), fine art is relatively recent to the Chinese language. The distinction of painting as a form of cultivation is different enough from the familiar concept of art that there are problems in translating "art" into Chinese. According to the *Hanyu Da Cidian*, the historical literary usages of the Modern Chinese term for "art" or *yishu* 藝術 were in general reference to a broad range of disciplines which include literature, mathematics, archery, medicine, and divination (Yü 2007). Moreover this usage (perhaps better translated as "the arts" given the lack of plural noun conjugation in Modern Chinese, in any case *yishu* may even more properly be referred to as "the Chinese arts") has been continuous in literature from the Han dynasty to the Qing dynasty (circa 200 BCE to circa 1900 CE; Yü 2007). The first precedent for *yishu* as "art" in the familiar Modern English sense comes in a quote from Mao Zedong (1893–1976; Yü 2007). On the other hand, the *Hanyu Da Cidian* offers no literary precedents for "fine arts" or Modern Chinese *meishu* 美術, owing to the term's probable Japanese derivation.

Historically, the concept of art was introduced to Japan through the process of national modernization/Westernization, specifically within Meiji reform movements. Art historian Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853–1908), a philosophy professor from Harvard University, was sponsored by the Japanese state to teach at Tokyo Imperial

University. Karatani Kōjin writes, "…Fenollosa introduced the notion of looking at Japanese art as 'art.' Although up until then [*i.e*. Fenollosa's arrival] Japan did have an aesthetic tradition comparable to Art in the west, the process of perceiving it as 'Art' was actually the result of Fenollosa's activities" (Marra 2001, 44). Okakura Kakuzō (岡倉覚三 1862–1913), another art historian and Fenollosa's disciple, writes a letter to the Painting Appreciation Society, an organization in Japan formed in 1884: "…over there [the West, presumably] they set up a distinction between pure art and applied arts, and the separation of artists from designers is especially strong" (the letter was written in 1887; Marra 2001, 76). Okakura's quote reveals that the audience, certainly reflecting some larger segment of Japanese society, did not differentiate among "pure" fine art, craft, or design. Certain Japanese audiences' categorical understanding of paintings and other such objects before modernization must reflect how contemporaneous Chinese audiences understood such objects, given the historical proximity of the two cultures. The dominant East Asian tradition largely defined paintings as expressions of aesthetic and moral cultivation that reflected the status of the creator and the viewer.

Labeling a material object as (fine or pure) art disconnects the object from other contexts perhaps more central to the actual function of the object, as in religious function, by placing it within a closed aesthetic discourse (see Foulk 2001 and Alpers 1991). In order to reclaim these functional contexts, particular objects formerly seen as art must be situated within cultural contexts. One type of context is to privilege the experience of sight. Objects previously circumscribed as art are instead regarded as simply embedded within a larger visual culture. This concept of visual culture has the benefit of encompassing more of an object's social functions, placing it within a contextual cultural

system, while obviating the pretense of special refinement or the implications of purity which often define fine art. Locating painting within a visual culture also places painting in a more generalized taxonomical system closer to "the arts" as they were likely understood in pre-modern East Asia.

Of course, adopting the interpretive methodology of visual culture also leads to some problems. Mieke Bal's (2003) criticism of visual culture is in its "visual essentialism," that circumscribed objects are reduced to a visual "purity" distinct from other senses and other modes of interaction between subject and object (6). Bal (2003) suggests that supporters of visual culture as a discipline have assumed a "rhetoric of materiality" as authoritative, but that this "materiality" is just one possibility for interpretation (9). To support this argument, Bal (2003) claims that, "there can be no direct link between matter and interpretation" (8). For Bal (2003), a more appropriate object of inquiry for visual culture is in the "visual event": "the act of seeing and its aftermath" (9). Accounting for this event necessitates something like an ethnographic record of the various aspects involved. The visual event can specifically be defined as the interaction between a subject that sees and an object that is seen. In this case, Chinese records on painting theory provide a rich source of records of audiences engaged in the act of looking.

The Rhetoric of Visuality

Seemingly prefiguring Bal's suggested object of visual culture, the privileging of the visual event is likewise emphasized in the culture and imagery of Buddhism, including moderate Chan Buddhism. The act of seeing is pervasive in the Buddhist textual tradition, and discussing the visual event in relation to Buddhism must take into account

the preexisting discourse on the visual event collected in Buddhist texts. Visual culture is already situated within the religion of Buddhism. Reginald A. Ray has listed paradigmatic events in the life of the Buddha from Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacaritaṃ* (the Sanskrit text is written circa second century, the Chinese translation *Fosuoxingzan* 佛所行讚 appears circa 420; CBETA, T04n0192), and one of these events fits with Bal's description of the visual event:

> 14. The receiving of darśan (darśana; P. [Pali], dassana), a physical-spiritual seeing and being seen, whereby the devotee may participate in the Buddha's enlightened charisma. . . . The Buddha presents himself to be seen by the suppliant, and the suppliant responds by opening himself—in the imagery of the text, opening his eyes wide—and taking in the spiritual energy of the Buddha. Thus darśan is a vehicle of transformation . . . . (Ray 1994, 90–91)

One dictionary provide the definition of the Sanskrit term *darśana* as "seeing, a view, views, viewing, showing" (Soothill and Hodous 1937, 415). *Darśana* was then translated into the Chinese term *guan* 觀, which carries the same definitions as the Sanskrit term and is used in the extended sense of viewpoint or insight. The various senses of the term *guan* somewhat indicate how visuality became a key metaphor in the practice of Buddhism. The sense of sight was generally deemed superior to the sense of hearing. For instance, Malcolm David Eckel (1992) proposes that for Buddhist logicians, "To see something is to know it more directly than to hear it through words" (149).

Visuality is also integral to the various forms of Buddhist meditation. Eckel provides an account of an instance in the well-known biography of the Tang dynasty monk Xuanzang (active until 664), in which the monk meditates by visualizing Maitreya, the Buddha of the future. Eckel (1992) notes that this scene depicts a particular form of

meditation: "Unlike the predominant form of meditation in the Ch'an or Zen tradition, Hsüan-tsang's visualization is an absorption so deep that he lost all awareness of his surroundings" (134). Eckel (1992) continues, saying this form of meditation "is not Ch'an, and there is no way to assimilate one to the other without doing violence to both" (136). Eckel's assertion that Chan and Zen Buddhist meditation practices and its relationship to the visual event are significantly different from those of other Buddhist traditions is a dichotomization. If cognitive "absorption" into a single object is the criterion for Xuanzang's meditative experience, then this absorption is similar to the Seon practices advocated by Chinul (1158–1210), a proponent of Zongmi. In a text by Chinul, he advocates the combination of Zongmi's theories with the practices of *kanhwa*-style meditation.[10] This type of meditation "consists of holding up to attention . . . twenty-four hours a day a single word or a short phrase . . . from a Chan case (*gong'an* [公案])" (Broughton 2009, 51). Xuanzang and Chinul both had meditation styles that were conducive to a depth of absorption. Chinul's practice is complicated by the use of the character *kan* 看 in *kanhwa* , because this character can be used in the general sense of looking, as well as in the sense of reading. *Kan* and related characters suggest that the divide between textuality and visuality is not as strong in East Asian cultural context as it is in other cultural traditions.

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[10] *Kanhwa* is the transliteration of the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese characters for *kanhua* or 看話. This style of Chan meditation was institutionalized by Dahui Zonggao (大慧宗杲, 1089–1163) in his text the Sayings Record of Chan Teacher Dahui Pujue (*Dahui Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄 Song dynasty; CBETA, T47n1998). While Dahui is a disciple of Linji, Chinul's application of Dahui's methods with Zongmi's theories attests to moderation. Chinul's text is the 1209 document 法集別行錄節要並入私記, which Broughton translates as the *Excerpts from the Separately Circulated Record of the Dharma Collection with Inserted Personal Notes* (see Broughton 2009).

Chan texts, like other Buddhist texts, often emphasize visuality. Chan lineage theories maintain a genealogical founding myth of the apostle Mahākāśyapa (摩訶迦葉 circa 500 BCE) viewing his teacher the Buddha twirling a flower. A reiteration of the story is found, for example, in Mahākāśyapa's entry in the Qing dynasty "*Fozu Zhengzong Daoying*" (*Qingke* 2006, 4). The story likewise appears, with some slight differences, in the "Sayings Record of Chan Teacher Dahui Pujue" (see note 10), the "Gateless Gate" ("*Wumen Guan*" 無門關 Song dynasty; CBETA, T48n2005), the "Historical Chronology of Buddhist Patriarchs" ("*Fozu Lidai Tongzai*" 佛祖歷代通載 compiled in the Yuan dynasty; CBETA, T49n2036), and other formative Chan canonical texts in the East Asian Buddhist canon. Its reiteration speaks to the narrative's continued persistence in the Chan Buddhist tradition.

Returning to the content of the story, Mahākāśyapa is the only conference attendee who sees something special in the Buddha's act of twirling a flower. The disciple smiles to the on-looking Buddha, and is thus endowed with some kind of special status or mastery. The Buddha announces that Mahākāśyapa receives the "Eye Treasury of Correct Teaching" (*zhengfa yancang* 正法眼藏), a mysterious phrase which nonetheless privileges the eye and visuality (*Qingke* 2006, 4). Mahākāśyapa is thus ready to transmit this "Eye Treasury" to perpetuate the lineage of Chan.

This incident is meant to express a fundamental transmission from teacher to disciple by means "separate from writing or formal doctrine" ("*buli wenzi / jiaowai biezhuan*" 不立文字 / 教外别傳; *Qingke* 2006, 4), but relies upon this textual axiom and story to get the point across. The privileging of sight through text thus implies a means for the transmission of status, and by extension the continuation of genealogical

succession, via the visual/textual event. Thus, recognizing the visual rhetoric of the meditation lineage is significant in further understanding how to establish access to some degree of status or power within Chan, and thus how Chan is structured as a whole. The Mahākāśyapa story exemplifies how Chan texts mythologized the visual event in terms of power.

As Faure (1998) writes regarding the art historical definition of Chan and Zen art, "The notion of animated [*i.e.* endowed with power] Buddhist icons has been repressed as a result of the modern and Western values of aestheticization, desacralization, and secularization." (769). The *Fozu Zhengzong Daoying* entry on the second patriarch Mahākāśyapa is significant and unlike other canonical records (for example, the internet edition of the Taisho Buddhist canon) in that it includes, on the page opposite his biography, the reproduction of a woodblock portrait illustration of him that can be likened to an icon. Presumably the original format of the text was a book and not a scroll: according to the title of the text, it was published in the Qing dynasty when book publishing was widespread. Moreover, the composition of text and image on each individual page matches the leaves of a book. The portrait occupies an area on the page roughly the same size as the area taken by the written biography. This relationship between image and text emphasizes to some extent the importance of visualization.

The portrait itself depicts, in thin lines, the upper torso and head of a heavily wrinkled elderly bald man, with a slight triangular cranial protuberance (the Sanskrit term is *ūrṇā*, a mark of the Buddha; this lump perhaps indicates the portrait makers' interest in depicting Mahākāśyapa as a legitimate inheritor of the Chan tradition), a light mustache, overhanging eyebrows, and elongated earlobes (a sign of longevity). He wears a

Buddhist monk's robe and sash. The right hand is folded over the other in front of his chest as if saluting someone in the Chinese manner. His mouth is curved in such a way that both sides turn downwards from the center then rise upwards at each end, as if half-smiling. The depiction is iconographical in that it serves a clear function related to the textual description an old man on the opposing page, is formalized in its similarity to other portraits in the book, and is inherently ritualistic/religious. Given the compositional equality between the picture and text, on facing pages, the two sides likely have been viewed by audiences, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, as having an equal status or value. It is unclear exactly how audiences imagined the relationship between text and image, but for the book image and text form two parts of a larger whole. Text and image likely retained such a relationship in the culture of Chan Buddhism.

CHAPTER 5

CRITERIA

Zen Art?

Modernization in East Asia frames Buddhist art. More specifically, as modernization and Westernization in Japan necessitated a new, modernist Buddhist institution there, this institution defined the terms by which certain audiences conceptualized East Asian and Buddhist material and visual culture—Zen Art is thus one manifestation of this modernist Buddhist rhetoric.

A survey of a few books on Zen Art attests to this use of rhetoric. The first book, Shin'ichi Hisamatsu's *Zen and the Fine Arts* presents a theoretical structure to determine the quality of Zen in art and a number of example pictures (Hisamatsu 1971). Hisamatsu's aesthetics of Zen stem from the concept of "formless self." Subsequently, seven criteria determine whether or not an object is within aesthetic range. Some of Hisamatsu's formal criteria include palpable phenomena evident in an object's mode of creation, its style. For example, the first criterion is "asymmetry"—Zen aesthetic value is determined from compositional imbalance. The third criterion, "austere sublimity or lofty dryness," is generally synonymous with a quality of looking "worn out," having a patina of oldness likely related to the connotations associated with the character *sabi* 寂.

However, Hisamatsu's categories also include non-stylistic, less easily determined aesthetic qualities. The fourth criterion "naturalness" has to do with the artist's level of

concentration in creating a work of art, and which is somehow not at odds with the sixth determinant "freedom from attachment." These two latter criteria are in a sense ineffable in that audiences are unlikely able to prove that an artist is in fact imbued with a particular psychological state simply by looking at a work of art. In the second part of the book, the plates shown following this theoretical base depict a variety of photographs from Japanese collections, including Noh masks, bamboo tea spoons, and a calligraphic interpretation of a Li Po (李白 701–762) poem by Song dynasty literatus Huang Tingjian (黃庭堅 1045–1105). These examples are particularly noteworthy in the sense that one could claim that none have any functional relationship to the religion of Buddhism other than Hisamatsu's ascription of Zen aesthetics upon them.

A second book published in 1970, *Zen Painting* by Yasuichi Awakawa, is mostly a pictorial survey of items selected by the author. The book includes an ink monochrome painting by famed warrior Miyamoto Musashi (宮本武蔵 1584–1675). The painting is a vertical hanging scroll in ink monochrome and depicts a small bird perched on a tall branch high above a low rock and a flowering plant. Awakawa provides no commentary on the painting other than its ascription to the martial artist. The reader must assume that based on the painting's inclusion in the book, the painting possesses some quality that makes it representative of "Zen painting," and must speculate as to why. The painting stylistically and thematically resembles other paintings, specifically paintings of the Birds and Flowers genre, one of six Chinese painting genres identified in the *Precious Mirror of Painting* (*Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑), a fourteenth century ranking of painters according to genre with no particular connection to the Buddhist religious establishment (Lachman 1992, 79).

Are there other criteria that can be used to categorize Miyamoto's painting? Perhaps the author is making a reference to the status of the painter, Miyamoto as Buddhist. By extension, could Miyamoto's famed warrior status give us the privilege of interpreting the work as simultaneously a martial painting? This is not to deny that Miyamoto Musashi has had some contact with Buddhism. If Awakawa is asserting that anyone can create a Zen painting simply by virtue of one's being a sometime follower of Buddhism, does this also apply to all people who painted with knowledge of Buddhism? Does being a "Zen painting" have anything to do with a painting's iconography or style? Simply put, Awakawa's criteria for selecting Zen paintings is suspect.

A likely precedent for both the Hisamatsu and Awakawa books is D. T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Originally published in English in 1959, the reedited book was in its eleventh printing as of 1993. The book is a series of essays explaining the links between Japanese culture and Zen. Topics range from "Zen and the Study of Confucianism," to chapters on samurai, swordsmanship, and tea. Suzuki mentions in the preface to his book that it is "not meant to be a textbook or a scholarly presentation" (Suzuki 1993, v). Unlike his academic work, Suzuki (1993) is sectarian, nationalistic, reductionist, and culturally chauvinist:

> It is a significant fact that the other schools of Buddhism have limited their sphere of influence almost entirely to the spiritual life of the Japanese people; Zen has gone beyond it. Zen has entered into every phase of the cultural life of the people. In China this was not necessarily the case." (21)

While Hisamatsu provides a systematic description of individual qualities of Zen Art, and Awakawa provides a series of examples, both of these monographs implicitly assume that Zen and art are linked. Suzuki's essays are unique in that they make the relationship between Zen and art more explicit, if still mystical and experiential, by equating all

Japanese experiences with Zen. The most significant chapter in the text is titled "General Remarks on Japanese Art Culture." In this chapter, Suzuki (1993) makes a distinction between Japanese spiritual and cultural life, saying that unlike other schools of Buddhism, "Zen has entered internally into every phase of the cultural life" (21). In terms of art historical theories, the contention that Zen is "internal" to every aspect Japanese cultural life is the most problematic in attempting to assert a functional relationship between Buddhism and visual culture. By claiming Zen as internal to every aspect of Japanese culture, Suzuki asserts that his version of Zen is the unchanging essence of a homogenous Japanese cultural identity. The rhetorical strategy of Suzuki's quote fits with larger Rinzai adaptations to Japanese modernity. In addition to being a vast oversimplification of Japanese culture, Suzuki's assertion denies variation in Zen thought and practice, and denies the larger Buddhist culture of which Chan and Zen are parts.

At the end of the chapter, Suzuki expands his concept of Zen beyond Japanese culture. Zen is supposedly broad enough to even subsume creativity itself: "There is another thing I must not forget to mention . . . , which is perhaps the most important factor in *sumiye* [墨絵, ink watercolor painting in the general East Asian style] as well as in Zen. It is creativity" (Suzuki 1993, 36). In defense of the creativity-as-Zen theory, Zen somehow possesses a "spirit of creativity" (Suzuki 1993, 37).

Links to Hisamatsu are found in Suzuki's aesthetic musings, such as on the "beauty" of "sabi" (Suzuki 1993, 24), or in Suzuki's discussion of asymmetry, specifically, the statement that, "Asymmetry is another feature that distinguishes Japanese art" (Suzuki 1993, 26). Suzuki's book also includes the above-mentioned Miyamoto Musashi

painting (Suzuki 1993, plate 44). For Suzuki, even the bugged-out eyes in a painting of Miyamoto are imbued with Zen. However, the discussion of Musashi's connection to Zen is more explicit in Suzuki's assertions of a Zen swordsmanship.

The shared theories found within Hisamatsu's *Zen and the Fine Arts*, Awakawa's *Zen Painting*, and Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*, though dominant, reflect one kind of manifestation of Japanese society's response to modernization/Westernization. Other theories of art also appeared. Some theorists doubt that the fields of Zen art, Zen aesthetics, or "*zenga*" (originally a Japanese term, literally translated "Zen painting") have any function apart from rhetoric. Regarding "*zenga*," historian Yamashita Yūji asserts that the subject of "*zenga*" is worthy of more scholarly attention in Japan, if only for the fact that the ascribed paintings are so commercially popular among collectors and devotees outside of Japan—Yamashita calls attention to the divide between the social function of certain paintings in a particular geographic region, apart from established religious significance in Japan (Yamashita 2000, 21). Yamashita's social consciousness is reflected in his curating an exhibition of "*zenga*" in Japan. The signage of the exhibition was titled "Zenga"—spelled with a Romanized alphabet—instead of Japanese characters (*e.g.* 禅画), legitimating the foreign use and popularization of the term, and likely suggesting the overall irony of Zen art as art, while still perpetuating the form of works of art in a museum.

Less ironically, writings of European art historians Helmut Brinker and Dietrich Seckel restate mystical dimensions in their assertions on Zen art (see Brinker and Kanazawa 1996 and Seckel 1989). Because these authors and others interpret Zen-mindedness to be cognitively impenetrable or ineffable, any sort of discourse on the

ascribed status of Zen art is theoretically impossible. The only assertion that remains is that of a superior status that Zen-mind bestows on the Zen devotee and thus the art. The pervasiveness of this sense of Zen ineffability in certain arts can be tied to orientalizing notions of Zen, to the extent that the construct somehow defines a general East Asian sense of "art" and aesthetics. The proselytization of modernist Zen in European languages have led to its being regarded a quintessential or token "Eastern" or "non-Western" religion, perpetuating a reductionist traditional/East versus modern/West dichotomy. Zen thus becomes representative of an "East" as a whole to complicit audiences. This is the case with the book *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*, published in 1996 in conjunction with a 1993 art exhibition in Zurich. The ideological distinction between "traditional" Japan and the "West" is inherent in the text. Early in the introduction, "About the Essence of Zen" is the following statement:

> "People in Japan traditionally have tended to understand and experience 'all things' of this world… from within,… much more so than in the West, where we try to comprehend and intellectually analyze them from the outside. This applies especially to people who have entrusted themselves to Zen Buddhism and its thinking." (Brinker and Kanazawa 1996, 11)

The editors Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanazawa appear to place Zen Buddhism as a distinctly Japanese mode of "understanding" and "experience," simplistically dichotomized against that of an assumed homogenous "West." Perhaps not intending a unified "East," Brinker's quote does have the effect of conflating the modernist, philosophical construct of Zen with Japanese national identity.

Overall, Brinker and Kanazawa's book shares more than a few affinities with those by Suzuki and others. *Zen* includes a section on "Zen Aesthetics and Theory of Art," which directly references Hisamatsu's "seven qualities of equal value" (Brinker and

Kanazawa 1996, 38). It is somewhat apologetic: "The mutual influence between spiritual and artistic currents of Zen Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism…, as well as the exaggerated application of Zen to all situations of life in recent times has sometimes led to the denial of the existence of a specific Zen art, especially in China" (Brinker and Kanazawa 1996, 37). The editors (perhaps responding to an earlier debate between Hu Shih and Suzuki in which Hu asserts that Chinese Ch'an is "no Ch'an at all"; Hu 1953, 7) seemingly deny recent theories put forth in Chinese language texts, such as "*Chan Lineage Aesthetics*" (*Chanzong Meixue* 禪宗美學), which shares much of the philosophical assumptions of modernist Zen (Zhang 2006), or "*Three Steps of Modern Calligraphy*" (*Xiandai Shufa San Bu* 現代書法三步), which asserts an essential similarity between modern calligraphic art and Chinese Chan Studies ("中國的書法藝術. . . 它極似中國的禪學"; Gugan 2005, 12). In any case, the work of modernist Zen and Chan cannot be limited to a Japanese culture. In addition, Brinker's characterization of a singular Japanese "experience" of the world set off against a homogenous "China" is simplistic. However, the inclusion of works from Chinese painters and calligraphers alongside Korean potters as representative of Zen art attests to the *Zen* text's internal theoretical contradictions.

Moderation

Are there other possibilities for locating paintings and other objects associated with art into a Buddhist visual culture analytical matrix? The Rinzai Zen modernist theory of a link between Zen and art cannot be denied, but the modernist circumscription of all of "Japanese culture" or "creativity" within the category Zen art is so broad as to be meaningless. The Rinzai modernist framework is complicated by the plurality of Chan

and the possibility of a moderate Chan Buddhist visual culture. While much art historical research uncritically accepts Rinzai modernist theories, this is not true of all such research. Attempting an analysis of visual culture does not mean to disavow art historical research on objects subsumed by Buddhist visual culture, because art history as a discipline is not necessarily bound by the same rigid national and sectarian issues that mark the Japanese modernist writings of Suzuki and others mentioned above. Even within a modernist text, instances of disjuncture or difference with the text's own predominant ideologies often appear. The goal for this section is to locate art historical discourses within Buddhist visual culture that offer ways of looking at Chan visual culture apart from the Rinzai modernist perspective.

Some art historians have offered avenues for interpretation that attempt to avoid both the cultural generalizations of Rinzai modernism and the cultural preconceptions of traditional fine art theories. This has inevitably entailed direct analysis of the methodologies used to categorize objects understood as Chan or Zen art, and thus to redefine the functions of the objects themselves. Analysis of these specific criteria will be used to concretize the theory of moderate Chan visual culture by locating specific objects and discourses in relation to the outline of visual culture put forth above.

The criteria for categorizing objects are varied. Charles Lachman (2005) identifies four distinct "discursive practices" in twentieth century art historical discourse on East Asian painting which have been used to assert Chan or Zen art: "style and technique," "subject matter," relevance to Buddhist doctrinal iconicity/iconoclasm, and the "enlightened" status of the painting (41–43). These will be discussed below.[11]

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[11] Lachman's own analysis of the link between Chan and art—for Lachman (2005),

Somewhat distinct from Lachman's "discursive practices," Julia K. Murray (2007) presents three interpretive criteria: "conceptual approach, compositional structure, and format" (14). For Murray (2007), these are "Three Aspects of the Visual Presentation of Narrative" (14). While Murray's taxonomy was intended towards categorizing the specific medium of narrative illustration, applying her interpretation to a discussion of Buddhist visual culture is helpful, as her criteria are not beholden to traditional formulations of Buddhist or Zen art. Instead, narrative illustration is a type of visual object that is sometimes related to Buddhism, but is not necessarily defined by it. As the title of the volume suggests, the purport of Murray's analysis is to explicate the connection between narrative illustration and Confucian ideology. However, Murray's three criteria are primarily used to organize earlier research, which did not specify narrative illustration from the indistinct categories of pictures or painting. As will be seen below, the three criteria are generally applicable to a variety of objects. The differences between Murray's categories of interpretation and Lachman's analysis add new levels of discourse regarding visual culture which broaden the earlier art historical formulations identified by Lachman.

"the term Buddhist art is perfectly functional, so long as it is understood as a convenience, a designation for a category whose borders are ever shifting and whose contents are constantly being renegotiated" (2005, 52)—in historical context is largely informed by the *Precious Mirror of Painting*. Lachman (2005) states, "nowhere in surviving Song or Yuan sources does the characterization of painting as the pictorial realization of belief or attainment appear" (49). The implications of his argument reassert formal analysis because "the content we perceive in icons (or artworks) is not intrinsic to the objects before us" (Lachman 2005, 51). However, the discussion of Chan and art in this thesis seeks a broader discourse than the one implied by the *Precious Mirror*, as historically a variety of theories on the subject appeared in various languages and at various times both preceding and throughout modernity.

The following sections attempt to bring both of these criteria into consideration in a discussion of objects, in terms of how these objects function according to the divide between visual culture and Zen art. The criteria may be organized into a division between (1) the social function of each object, and (2) style, as in the formal qualities of each object. Thus, the criteria will be analyzed in terms of two larger groupings: function is analyzed in terms of status and environment; style is examined in terms of format, technique, conceptualization, and theme. Interpreting visual culture in such a way will hopefully provide a multifaceted yet specific examination of the possibilities for a Chan visual culture.

Status

According to some modern art historians, works of art achieve status as Chan art and Zen art based on the artist's level of enlightenment, and that Chan art or Zen art is a manifestation of an "awakened" person's "awakening." In books such as *The Art of Twentieth Century Zen* by Audrey Yoshiko Seo and Stephen Addiss, or consequently in viewing art created by Chan and Zen monastics, a presupposition is that because the artist has achieved some level of enlightenment, then the artwork becomes somehow imbued with this sensibility (Seo 2000). According to these authors, the quality of the content of the work in terms of accurate, lively representation or brush dexterity becomes insignificant compared to the unquantifiable, though somehow evident, expression of the artist's religio-psychological experience. The authors maintain that enlightenment is proven through attainment of rank within the Zen institutional religious establishment. Thus, seemingly any objects touched by these masters are verifiable as Zen art. A

similar proposition can also be found in Suzuki's essay on the fine arts: "Whatever they may paint of nature will inevitably be expressive of this intuition. . ." (1993, 30).

Contrarily, if we look at the historical transmission process within Buddhism, we find that there is no guarantee that the person ascending to the position of abbot is at all enlightened. With regard to Chan rhetoric, T. Griffith Foulk (1993) writes that the "point [is] repeatedly made . . . dharma transmitted from master to disciple is literally inconceivable: it has no specifiable content and no marks by which it can be recognized" (154). Faure (1996) shares reservations regarding enlightenment, and comes to a similar conclusion: "The assumption that there is an 'essence' of Buddhism, a kind of perennial Dharma [a Sanskrit term, here taken as "teaching"] to which only 'authentic' masters would have access, is to be rejected as ideologically suspect" (57). Sharf (1992) notes, "The abbot's primary religious duty consists in ritually enacting the role of Buddha" (6). Having undergone so many years of monastic training, in constant contact with the designated leader of the community through discussion and ritual dialog, Chan monastics could easily have repeated a teacher's rhetorical style and other daily practices should they have had to assume the post of abbot, without any presumption of enlightenment.

In terms of painter status, the *Precious Mirror of Painting* provides further information:

> there are essentially three distinct groups of painters represented: literati, members of the imperial painting academy, and Buddhist monks (with a few Daoists thrown in). The subject matter favored by literati stands out rather forcefully—entry after entry mentions ink bamboo, ink plum, various landscape themes, and so on. . . . With regard to the other groups, however, some seeming anomalies are readily apparent. For example, of the sixteen painters identified as monks. . . , fourteen are associated with literati-like subjects, such as bamboo, plum, orchids, and landscape;

> by contrast, almost all of the painters associated with Buddhist subjects are identified as members of the painting academy. (Lachman 2005, 48)

Thus various relationships among subject, painter, and Chan Buddhism appear negated, or at least indeterminate. Buddhist monastics paint literati subjects, while professional academicians paint Buddhist themed paintings.

Environment

Visual culture and the visual event implies a visual environment in which the subject and object (seer and seen) interact. While environment is certainly a factor in framing how an object is seen, environment does not necessarily determine the interaction between subject and object. For instance, Chan monasteries seem obvious places to store Chan paintings. While this is certainly true, not all the objects contained within a monastery are necessarily Chan objects. Placement in a monastery could ascribe a sense of religiosity onto an object through the context of religious environment, but this placement does not necessarily relate to the function, shape, or content of the object itself, especially if the object is taken into the monastery from an explicitly non-religious context. Charles Lachman provides some evidence:

> One fairly constant design feature of these [Song dynasty monastery] complexes is the inclusion of a large reception hall where the abbot would entertain officials and literati, and where paintings would be used as decoration. . . . In this context, and considering the increased pressures on monasteries to attract private funding, . . . Chan [monastery] paintings that employ styles and subjects seemingly intended to engage literati preferences and tastes might be seen. . . as advertisements of enlightened refinement and shared sensibilities." (Lachman 2005, 49–50)

As mentioned, the historical Chan religious institution is not all too distinct from other contemporaneous sects of Buddhism, despite its claim for a teaching and transmission separate from the scriptural or doctrinal transmission as in other sects. Ritualized Buddhist practices seemingly antithetical to the antinomian characterization of

rhetorical Chan were widely practiced by Chan monastics. One example is the mummification of patriarchs. In an article describing the process, Robert Sharf relates some of the similarities between Chan practice and normal non-Buddhist ritual practices in imperial China (Sharf 1992). Sharf asserts that the portraits of eminent Chan patriarchs, the purpose of which is often related to ownership and the transmission of teaching authority (*i.e.* the successor receives a picture of the teacher prove legitimate succession) also held a ritual function. The portrait is placed on the physical seat of the abbot until a replacement could be appointed to take over the position. According to Sharf, pictures in a monastery serve essentially the same function as they would in non-Buddhist contexts. The soul of the deceased leaves the interred body of the master while it was prepared for mummification and inhabits the painting as a temporary residence. Thus monks coming to the teaching hall continued interacting with the portrait much as if it were the teacher himself. The portrait was also moved back and forth to the abbot's quarters for individual teaching, as was the practice when the abbot's spirit was still in his corporeal body. The portrait is in effect regarded the same way as the monk. Thus for proper ritualistic purposes, accurate renderings of the living monk were important, as they were in popular ritualistic practice outside of the monastery. Given the lack of difference between the practice of portraiture inside or outside the temple, one is hard pressed to classify Chan lineage portraits as much distinct from other types of portraiture. The shared funerary purposes of Chan and non-Chan portraiture could classify the two types as more similar than not, and not necessarily relate at all to any specifically Chan concepts, rhetorical or otherwise. Instead, the underlying themes of the ritual should more accurately be ascribed to popular funerary practices, while the

portrait is only significant in terms of representational likeness. On these terms Chan has been compared to an "ancestry cult" (Sharf 1992, 6). As such it is best to recognize the difficulty in simply labeling portraits of Chan patriarchs as Chan art based on the portraits' function within a monastery or other religious environment.

Format

In identifying a new Chan and Zen Buddhist visual cultures, how is one to consider the varying formats of objects in the subject-object relationship of the Buddhist visual event? Murray (2007) identifies format as, "the physical surface on which the representation is made" (15). Seemingly in reaction to the art historical focus on such formats as painting, recent studies present a diversity of formats with which to interpret the material culture of Buddhism. For instance, Faure analyzes the monk's robe as it pertains to a certain order of Zen Buddhism, ("*Quand l'habit fait le moine*: the symbolism of the kāṣāya in Sōtō Zen" in Faure 2003, 211–249). In *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, John Kieschnick (2003) discusses a broad range of objects, including sugar and tea. While robes, sugar, and tea are not objects with a primarily visual function, if for example these objects were displayed in a museum or reproduced in photographs, they would become visual. Isolating the visual component of an object separates the object from its historical function and places it in an aesthetic discourse. Hisamatsu's inclusion of a photograph of a tea scoop (*chashaku* 茶杓) in his treatise on Zen and fine art is an example.

However, the interactions involved in the pre-modern historical visual event are not necessarily defined by format. As noted above, the most central format in earlier discourses on East Asian art history has been painting, often specifically monochromatic

ink watercolor painting on paper or silk. Of course, painting exists on formats other than ink and paper, such as on walls and ceramics. Some non-painted formats also simulate the visual experience of the painting, and can be understood as cognate with paintings. These formats present two-dimensional compositions and often simulate the linear style of the ink brushstroke—for instance, tapestries, stone relief carvings, and lacquer decorations often replicate the style of painting. Because of the similarity in function as a means for representation, ink painting and cognate formats are thus visualized in analogous ways.

As discourse on viewing the format of painting has been present in Chinese records from at least the Tang dynasty, the historical visual interactions between subjects and objects have necessarily varied. A specifically Chan Buddhist visual event involving the format of painting is provided in one of the formative mythological texts of Chan and Zen Buddhism, the Dunhuang version of the Platform Sutra, a text composed in John McRae's "middle Chan" phase of textual development (making the text a formative in the development from earlier doctrinal texts to Chan's literary efflorescence in the Song Dynasty). This text is central to the entirety of the Chan and Zen cultural traditions, in that all later Chan/Zen lineages trace their own patriarchal genealogies back to the transmission story depicted in the text. The Platform Sutra also provides the most detailed canonical narrative of the early Chinese Chan transmission sequences.

According the story, a poetry contest is held for the position of sixth patriarch. The favored competitor, monk Shenxiu, writes on a wall intended for painted illustrations of the *Lankāvatāra Sutra* (楞伽阿跋多羅寶經; CBETA, T16n0670) and the fifth patriarch. Upon seeing Shenxiu's wall poetry, the fifth patriarch realizes that Shenxiu's verses, and

thus his ability to perpetuate Chan teaching, are inadequate (Yang 2001, 12). As Yampolsky translates, "the Fifth Patriarch called the painter Lu to draw illustrations from the *Lankāvatāra Sutra* on the south corridor wall. The Fifth Patriarch suddenly saw this [Shenxiu's] verse and, having read it, said to the painter Lu: '. . . I have decided not to have the pictures painted after all. It is said in the *Diamond Sutra*: 'All forms everywhere are unreal and false''" (Yampolsky 1967, 130). The fifth patriarch's statement regarding "all forms" ("凡所有相， 皆是虛妄"; Yang 2001, 12) is specifically relevant to painting the statement indicates that both the poem and the illustration as "forms" cannot adequately present Chan Buddhist truth. Format, as a means for representation, does have a role in the visual culture of Chan as the inherently false object to be negated in favor of the thing represented. The Chan visual event in this instance is the viewing of all formats as a means for representation of Chan truth.

The incident in the Platform Sutra also reiterates the close relationship between image and text. Format often provides a link whereby picture and text are inseparable, as pointed out in the above discussion of the *Fozu Zhengzong Daoying*, in which individual portraits and biographies of Buddhist patriarchs are inextricably linked side-by-side. Text enters into a complicated relationship with visuality, as text is often not as immediately visual as painting. The culture of text has also been somewhat distinct from visual culture for much of Chinese and larger East Asian history. Writing had been more highly esteemed than painting and illustration, as literacy had been essential in differentiating the scholar class from lower classes. Even in the story of Shenxiu and the fifth patriarch above, ultimate authority is not enacted through the pronouncement of the patriarch, but by the patriarch invoking the textual authority of the

Diamond Sutra, which is not a specifically Chan text. The sutra was translated in the fourth century before the establishment of Chan lineage and purports to contain the actual words of the Buddha (CBETA, T08n0235).

The patriarch's relationships to the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Lankāvatāra Sutra* map out the various relationships between subject, text, and image. The authority of the patriarch is unquestioned, as he continues the lineage of Chan from Bodhidharma and ultimately the Buddha. For the patriarch, an illustration (of the *Lankāvatāra* on the wall) holds the same value and function as writing (in this case Shenxiu's poem), so that both image and text are equalized and dually capable of representation, but that in this specific event, image, text, and any forms or formats are inadequate for the propagation of Chan ultimate truth. The vocalized quote is the format the fifth patriarch uses for his representation, a concept from the *Diamond Sutra*, but this format is enough to negate both the poetry and the image. Formats are fundamentally seen as modes of representation, with little regard to type of format; but no formats, visual or otherwise, are capable of expressing the ultimate religious belief of Chan Buddhism.

<u>Technique</u>

As Murray takes format to be the "physical surface" for representation, then technique is the manner in which a format is manipulated to make a representation. As stylistic variation on a given format is contiguous with the format itself, then neither format nor style is able to express the ultimate concept of Chan religious belief. However, this inability of style to represent Chan belief is complicated by larger East Asian epistemic traditions. These traditions perpetuate the idea that style represents the inner realities of the person, in effect unifying style with status.

The format of an object determines possibilities for stylistic variation. This type of determinism is common to traditional East Asian painting and calligraphic practices, as both painting and calligraphy share common formats. Painting had already been taxonomized into a limited number of major subject genres by the time the *Precious Mirror of Painting* was written in the Song dynasty. The genres themselves became standardized so that means of expression was based less on genre than on such factors as composition and brushwork. However, brushwork was already somewhat determined, as basic skills in painting largely developed from copying the brushwork of earlier master painters. Standard models are provided in the "*Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*" (芥子園畫傳), a popular and well-received text first published in 1701 (Petrucci 1910, 291). The models provided all relate to the genres described in *Precious Mirror*, but vary in style. Examples in the manual include tree-painting styles from early landscape painters such as Jing Hao (荆浩, early tenth century; Petrucci 1910, 100) and Xia Gui (夏珪, circa 1200; Petrucci 1910, 101). These examples, as well as countless later paintings and related objects, attest to a general continuity in ink painting style from the Song to Qing dynasties.[12]

A significant factor in the emphasis on brushwork is the related medium of calligraphy, which requires the same formats and materials as painting. Calligraphy presents a unique way of appreciating variation in technique. A textual object, for instance a woodblock reproduction of a sutra, possesses a format and a text. To look at calligraphy is to appreciate the technique of representation that exists in between the

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[12] The introduction of European painting styles is often attributed to the European court painters in the early Qing dynasty imperial court. These painters included Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766) and Jean-Denis Attiret (1702–1768).

physical format and the linguistic content of the text. The technique of calligraphy was interpreted and visualized in a type of discourse different from the discourse of format and text, and more analogous to painting. Like painting, calligraphic skill is based on the ability to deploy the calligraphic styles of earlier masters. Painters and calligraphers internalized classical styles and deployed them to convey a meaningful connection to the status of the earlier masters and to perpetuate cultural values. A Song dynasty calligraphy compendium, the *Daguan Tie* (大觀帖, "*Daguan*" refers to the Song dynasty emperor's reign period from the years 1107 to 1110; see *Zhongguo* 2002), was an imperially sponsored project to collect representative works of famous earlier calligraphers, copy the works by carving them onto woodblocks, and collect all the calligraphy in a single source. The compendium privileges the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi (王羲之, 303–361), whose writing style was already nearly 700 years old by the time of the *Daguan Tie*, clearly indicating the continuity and tradition of calligraphic technique. Unlike other scholar calligraphers, admiration for Wang Xizhi's calligraphy has mainly been determined along aesthetic lines.[13] His mythic/historical position in calligraphic discourse is largely unquestioned. Recensions of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy remain highly prized models to this day.

The discourse of classical calligraphic tradition was maintained by the literati, who had access to historical calligraphic models. However, the literati were not the only ones who viewed calligraphy. Chinese records provide various theories of how

[13] For a discussion on Song dynasty appropriation of Wang Xizhi`s tradition, see Ledderose 1979. Tradition has it that while Song literati calligraphers could directly analyze the work of Wang Xizhi, later calligraphers could only follow copies of Wang Xizhi. Calligraphy connoisseurship developed to a great extent in the Song dynasty.

calligraphy was visualized and interpreted. Amy McNair points to the heterogeneity of these theories by contrasting the interpretations of three Song dynasty social groups: Confucians, lay-Buddhists, and Buddhist monastics. In an analysis of the colophons attached to a calligraphic rendering of the *Diamond Sutra* by Zhang Jizhi (張即之, 1186–1249), McNair finds that the monks who respond to the work do not respond to the calligraphic content of the text: "the monks seem to have succeeded in the pious struggle against appreciating this sutra transcription as a source of aesthetic gratification" (McNair 2001, 84). These monks likely viewed the calligraphic text as the fifth patriarch viewed forms, as little more than a conduit for representation of textual content (*i.e*. Buddhist truth), without regard to format or technical virtuosity.

Unlike the monks, the Confucians that McNair (2001) cites readily submit their criticism on specifically calligraphic terms: the Confucians are partisans of the Wang Xizhi style, and Zhang's calligraphy is an affront to that tradition (75–8). McNair's analysis of the Buddhist response to Confucian discourse is that "Buddhist artists may have rejected the classical repertoire or brushstrokes in the interest of self-expression, or they may have engaged in calligraphy or painting as a religious exercise . . . , in which case the beauty of the object produced was of little importance" (McNair 2001, 80). McNair somewhat implies that the lay-Buddhist's calligraphy is carefully mediated, but another interpretation is that some monks and Buddhist laity simply lacked the same degree of technical refinement so esteemed by the literati class. Claims of a Buddhist aesthetic are thus an apologia for lacking the skills of an elite literati calligrapher. If a Buddhist style of calligraphy did exist, it might simply be a repository for non-elite calligraphy. However, Ming dynasty literati-official Dong Qichang, who appropriated

the rhetoric of Chan for most of his own theories of painting, is simultaneously on the side of the classical tradition of Wang Xizhi, and Confucianism more generally (a biography of Dong which covers both his Confucian and his Buddhist behaviors is found in Wu 1962). It would be difficult to isolate any noticeable Buddhist or Confucian style in Dong's landscapes or calligraphy.

Yet modern writers such as Hisamatsu, Addiss, and others have claimed Zen and Chan styles or aesthetics. The Chan/Zen aesthetic style asserted is a combination of technique with the content of the representation. Aesthetic theories such as these were likely used to support the larger goals of modernist Zen theoreticians in responding to discourses larger than those confined to Buddhist religious practice. The valorization of stylistic and compositional strategies such as "asymmetry" seems to be a reaction to the normative ideals of symmetry propounded by dominant modern aesthetic discourses, such as an assertion of East Asian asymmetry vis-à-vis the position of symmetry in the Western aesthetic tradition.

Conceptualization

The modernist creation of the field of Zen aesthetics, including the categories of Zen art and Zen painting (or zenga), has led to several recent criticisms of the concepts, and note their nativist and nationalist motivations. Robert Sharf (1993) states that "By claiming a deep connection between Japanese high culture [*e.g.* the examples provided in Hisamatsu's book] and Zen, Japanese scholars managed to apotheosize the nation as a whole" (33). Given that several authors mentioned were students of a program of modernist Zen, following D. T. Suzuki's basic modernist conceptual structure linking his

version of Buddhism to art, it is not surprising that the development of modernist Chan art theories and aesthetics include some nationalist agendas.

The advertisement of certain modern artists and art as representing modernist Zen aesthetics or values, for example in the New York art market of the 1950s and 1960s, also makes it difficult to deny the commodification or branding involved in modernist Zen, at least for the purpose of marketing Japanese cultural products, and perhaps even the idea of Japan as a modern nation, to international consumers (see the analysis of Munakata Shiko's appeal in Manhattan in the 1950s and 1960s in Hockley 2004). Specifically, an undifferentiated, ahistoric "Zen" becomes valued as an economic commodity, a cultural commodity, or at least imparts a sort of brand identity onto a commodity. Thus a product perceived as possessing a "Zen" brand identity possesses a higher value for consumers. One result of taking "Zen" as a brand for the sale of art is that "Zen" could subsequently be used to advertise any number of goods or services, eventually rendering the term "Zen" meaningless. Confusion between this usage "Zen" and Japanese national identity further influences the connotations associated with Japanese products in general, and the perpetuation of a homogenous Japanese national identity based on the ideals of modernist Zen rhetoric.

Proselytizers and advertisers have been successful to a degree. Decades after the mid-century "Zen boom," there remain Zen-themed businesses as in the aforementioned Zen Buffet and consumer goods such as Zen mp3 players. This sort of commodification is clearly beyond the imagination of early modernist Zen proselytizers like Suzuki, but the process has been largely inescapable. The connection made between Zen and various goods or services blunts any specific definition of Zen for non-specialists.

Work by certain modern artists is justifiably "Zen art" in the conceptual sense that their works self-consciously take the modernist Zen construct as a theoretical frame often in the process of creation or viewing. In this sense, a category of modern Zen art is no different from the conceptual categorizations of modern minimalist art or abstract expressionism. The mid-twentieth century calligraphic work in the journal *Bokubi*, and the related artistic movement, attests to certain artists and groups willing to appropriate modernist Zen into their constructions of their own identity as an art movement. *Bokubi*, and its editor the calligrapher Morita Shiryu (1912–1999), adopted the term "zenga" in some publications. This type of modern Zen art relies on its intrinsic relationship and similarity to contemporaneous styles of modern art, which are likewise divided into subgroups and movements.

The importance of conceptual modes in the classification of different modern art forms is widely accepted. However, considering Chan art in terms of any Chan conceptual basis in the process of an object's creation or interpretation becomes problematic for historical categorizations of Chan or Buddhist art prior to the twentieth century. Published in 1999, *Dreaming the Southern Song Landscape* by Valérie Malenfer Ortiz asserts that in the Song dynasty, Chan is better taken in regard to painting as an intellectual program comparable to Neo-Confucianism (135). According to this idea, Chan is altogether separate from its religious context, and is purely related to conceptualization, as an underlying philosophical determinant that shapes how an object is understood. However, isolating the philosophical concepts within Chan Buddhist discourses separates Chan from its basic definition and function within Buddhist religious

practice. Asserting a Chan philosophy would perpetuate a modernist agenda of secularization and decontextualization of both Chan and Zen Buddhism.

Furthermore, simply classifying an object on levels of conceptual influence cannot account for the variety of influences that shape individual painters and calligraphers. An analogy might be classifying a school of art as Confucian. Under such a rubric, much of the paintings and calligraphy of by the literati class should all be subsumed under a generalized theoretical heading of Confucian as they largely stem from a Confucian literati discourse based on Confucian classical texts. Certainly, we can interpret some level of conceptual influence in objects, albeit separate from categorization of an object in terms of Chan conceptualization. Attributions of conceptual basis are largely conjectural, particularly for paintings with insufficient of invalid historical data. These attributions may or may not be appropriate, and only interpretatively related to the actual format, style, or theme of a painting. If landscapes can be classified as primarily Chan, Confucian, or Daoist, are they to be considered any less landscape paintings? James Cahill adds the following:

> In all these paintings, scenes that might be termed Confucian, moralistic and secular, are found at least as commonly as those with Buddhist or Daoist themes. The truth is that landscape imagery in China, from beginning to end, is an open signifier into which a diversity of meanings can be fitted, with appropriate alterations and additions, often including inscriptions that clarify the particular purpose to which the nature imagery is being put on this particular occasion. (Barnhart 1997, 8).

Conceptualization is also complicated in that sometimes the conceptual relationships between Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism are depicted simultaneously within the content of a painting. A common subject in East Asian painting is the three vinegar tasters, in a sense, a mythologized family portrait of the first patriarchs for each of the three creeds (for an example see plate 60 in Suzuki 1993). Chinese syncretism of the

three creeds is discussed in *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism* by Robert Sharf (2002), in which the concept of syncretism as degeneracy is deconstructed as presupposing the purity of Buddhism upon its arrival from the West. Sharf clarifies, however, that there is no singular, essential Buddhism prior to the religion's translation into Chinese. Taking Sharf's model, we can likewise add that this same process of acculturation took place to some extent upon Buddhism's movement into other regions within the Sinic cultural sphere of influence, including Japan.

The intermingling of the three Chinese creeds is ubiquitous during Japan's Five Mountains period (roughly contemporaneous with Japan's Muromachi era, 1336–1573), a period marked by the imperial and military sponsorship of a Zen monastic system throughout Japan. Despite the power and cultural influence of the Japanese monastic system, much of what was introduced into the society was not necessarily Buddhist, despite being introduced into larger Japanese society through the Buddhist monastic institution. The Chan Buddhism incorporated into Japan during the Five Mountains period came alongside other forms of continental culture separate from the Chan Buddhist institution, such as Neo-Confucian philosophy and Daoist doctrines (see Pollack 1986). As such, despite the religious institution's structural basis on Chinese Chan Buddhist currents of the time, actual social practices involved a hybrid Sino-Japanese cultural sensibility, perhaps in some cases one not even directly tied to Buddhism. Lumping together the entire cultural product of the period as narrowly Chan Buddhist, or singularly Chinese or Japanese, when based on larger multicultural interactions is inaccurate. Isolating conceptual strategies into discrete philosophies is too limiting.

Theme

Apart from the ritualistic—and not specifically Buddhist—function of ancestor worship or lineage, the criterion that distinguishes Chan Buddhism from other forms of Buddhism is its literature. As stated, Chan texts can be organized in terms of their historical development from doctrinal treatises to encounter dialog. The compilation and standardization in the Song dynasty of a Buddhist canon normatizes the meditation lineage through the inclusion of Chan texts. The continued function of the Chinese Buddhist literary canon throughout East Asia upholds the normatization of the Chan scriptures in subsequent historical periods. As much of the reconstructed history of the Chan lineage depends on reading the Chan text as literature, a designation of Chan visual culture likewise benefits from direct linkage to these historical sources. However, as Chan scriptures are to be primarily understood as literary or creative, the literature must be critically analyzed to determine its historicity, and its inherent religious and political bias. This reading of Chan literature parallels how objects in Chan visual culture are understood, as means for representing the content of Chan Buddhist texts. Paintings, calligraphy, and other objects associated with the canon can be identified as Chan visual culture if the objects depict the content of Chan textual tradition. Such a rubric puts the criteria that determine Chan visual culture not on any unquantifiable and thus highly subjective and dubious ascription of ineffability, but instead on something more immediately evident, the subject matter or theme of an object. Classification in terms of subject is analogous to the genre divisions of paintings in East Asian art history, such as found in the *Precious Mirror*.

The categorization of the Chan Buddhist subject is an iconographical issue, in that the process of identifying an object as Chan Buddhist involves evaluating the content represented on an object in terms of its relationship to normative Chan discourse. As Chan Buddhism is one subcategory of Buddhism, Chan subjects are ultimately Buddhist subjects, albeit unique to Chan literature. Depictions of people, objects, events, or even quotations (as in calligraphy) germane to the literature of Chan constitute Chan subjects. Paintings associated to the purported lineage of Chan can thus be included into the classification, as lineage records are integral to Chan literature. As lineage records are sometimes inconsistent, Chan objects can further be subdivided according to individual schools of Chan. For instance, Guifeng Zongmi's status as a Chan master is sometimes identified within Chan lineages and sometimes not (as in some Japanese Zen traditions). As Zongmi himself produced a number of Chan texts, asserted his own Chan status within the Heze lineage (荷澤宗; Broughton 2009, 12), and is included in certain Chan lineage records, Zongmi's portrait (as found in *Qingke* 2006, 239) is validly a Chan object. Images of the historical Buddha are more accurately Buddhist objects given the patriarch's pan-Buddhist status, one example being "Sākya [the Buddha] leaving his mountain retreat" by Liang Kai (梁楷 circa 1200; Suzuki 1993, Plate 12.), a painting commonly used to assert Zen art. Fruits, such as persimmons, though possibly mentioned in scriptural texts, seem inappropriate subjects for Chan painting. This includes the painting "Persimmons," ascribed to Fachang Muxi (法常牧溪 1207–1291; Suzuki 1993, frontispiece), which has been used to justify not only Zen aesthetics but also Daoist aesthetics (see Chang 1975).

Foulk (2001) argues for a reading of Buddhist visual culture that transcends fixation on merely iconographical merits, thus transcending the linking of image with textual content that this thesis proposes (14). Instead he suggests something like an anthropological use of visual culture, through the interpretation of objects in ritual context as currently practiced. While critical analysis of this kind of data provides theories for ritual use, determining the current use of an object does not necessarily provide an accurate reading of how an object was used historically. The primacy of historical documents in analyzing objects created in antiquity and sometimes within contexts that no longer exist makes these documents necessary tools in interpreting function.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The reception of Buddhist art in the United States has largely been defined by a single Japanese Zen Buddhist lineage with its own sectarian doctrines and devotees. The teachings of that lineage do not represent the teachings of all of the Zen lineages in Japan. Moreover the Zen teachings in Japan do not provide a means of understanding how Chan Buddhist doctrines have been used in Chinese Buddhist culture, let alone Korean or Vietnamese Buddhist culture. Furthermore, the criteria used to present objects as Zen or Chan art are often unrelated to the historical contexts of the objects themselves. The definitions of Chan art and Zen art presented in this thesis hopefully present alternative, functional theories of Buddhist art and visual culture that encompass the variety of Buddhism in East Asia.

It is important to state that this thesis is not consciously derived from any allegiance to any particular religion or religious motive. The research of a several scholars has provided a wider and clearer view of the cultural and historical development of Chan Buddhism and its material culture within Buddhist historical context. I have written this thesis hoping to assist in such an endeavor, but realize that there is always room for improvement.

This thesis would most directly benefit from fluency in Japanese-language scholarship. Much valuable material has been written and published in recent decades

that has yet to be translated. The research may also be wanting in terms of overall familiarity with Chinese Buddhist scriptures and epigraphy. Familiarity with Buddhist texts is daunting not only for the size of the established library of canonical Chinese texts, but also because of the vast numbers of non-canonical and local texts. Likewise incalculable are the number of objects potentially subsumed under the rubric Buddhist art. Given the enormity of the above mentioned resources, one's current efforts towards an all-encompassing definition of Chan Buddhist art is thus analogous to a grain of sand within a seemingly infinite multidimensional universe.

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